BLESSING AND PRAISE

A BOOK OF MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS

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To Rabbi B. Klyfeld.
from
Morton C. Fierman
Chaplain

ברכה ותהלה

Blessing and Praise

A Book of Meditations and Prayers for Individual and Home Devotion.

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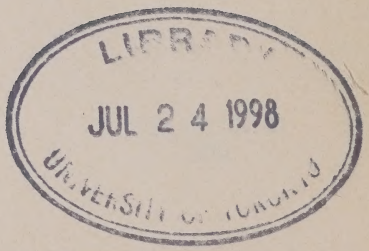

Every day will I bless Thee;
And I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.

Psalm 145, 2.

Table of Contents

Foreword 7
Meditation 9
Morning Prayer 12
Starting Anew 15
Daily Revelation 19
The Sabbath 22
Rejoice in the Lord 26
Sincerity 28
Rosh Hashanah—The New Year 31
Justice 35
God Our Refuge 38
Out of the Depths 41
God's Love 44
Ignorance and Evil 47
Conciliation 50
God Is Near 53
Yom Kippur—The Day of Atonement 57
God's Bounty 61
Succoth—The Feast of Tabernacles 64
From Strength to Strength 68
Light Divine 71
Reliance 74
Hanukkah—The Feast of Light 77
Envy 80
Tolerance 83
Compensation 87
Purim—The Feast of Joy 90
Prayer for Others 93
Israel's Unity 96
Righteousness 99

Hospitality 102
Our Enemies 105
Pesach—The Feast of Freedom 108
Immortality 111
God Our Sustainer 115
Suffering 118
Holy Places 121
Presence of God 124
Courageous Faith 127
Reverence 130
Duty 133
Shabuoth—The Feast of Weeks 135
Vision and Hope 139
Accepting the Burden 143
God Our Eternal Home 146
Tisha Be-ab—The Ninth of Ab 149
Humility 152
Co-operation 155
Alike Before God 158
Man's Place in Nature 161
Night Prayer 164
Index 167

Foreword

The public service in the synagog is not planned so as to satisfy the whole need for prayer. The synagog ritual contains, primarily, the prayers of the people of Israel as a community. It addresses itself to the whole people: Hear, O Israel. Its vision is historical, and when it contemplates the future, it concerns itself with the task of Israel in the divine plan for world salvation. Although the public prayer offers considerable opportunity for private devotion, it can never provide for all the spiritual needs of the individual. The individual has many difficulties which are his alone and are not related directly to the problems of his people. For the needs of individuals there must always be private prayer.

Public prayer can hardly be fervent if there is not a background of private devotion. If the week has been prayerless, the Sabbath will be spiritless and its prayer mechanical. Unless the faith to praise the Lord be bred in the discipline of daily thanksgiving, the psalms chanted in the synagog will be meaningless. Unless man, in his private meditations, find the way to God, his public petitions will be mechanical. The worshiper must seek the Lord at all times, so that the synagog may derive devotional power from the ardor of private prayer.

The practise of private prayer was always cultivated in Israel. Jewish literature has preserved many beautiful prayers uttered by sages

and seers. Tehinnot—books of private devotion—have always been used in Jewish homes in the past. To this literature we add this book, in the hope that it may bring strength to many hearts, and help many to find again that the Lord is near to those who call upon Him, who call upon Him in truth.

This book contains fifty themes, which express, in a general way, all the more frequent religious ideas. Each one of the fifty themes contains four distinct elements: a Scriptural reading; a selection from post-biblical literature; a meditation, and a prayer. It is not intended that the themes be read, necessarily, in rotation. An index is provided, so that the reader may select the theme closest to his need. However, for the sake of those who wish to read the book consecutively, the holiday themes are placed in the order in which they occur in the calendar, and the other themes are grouped around the festival theme with which they approximately agree in spirit.

The poems in the themes, God's Love, The Sabbath, God our Eternal Home, are reprinted from The Standard Book of Jewish Verse, by Joseph Friedlander, with the kind permission of the heirs of the author.

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Meditation

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Thy doing; I muse on the work of Thy hands.

Let my musing be sweet unto Him; as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord.

This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

O God, Thou art my God, earnestly will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is.

Psalm 143, 5; 104, 34; Joshua 1, 8; Psalm 63, 1.

When man quits the world, he is asked: "Hast thou been busy in the study of the Torah and in work of loving-kindness? Hast thou, morning and evening, declared Thy Maker as the King? Hast thou acknowledged thy fellow man as king over thee in meekness of spirit?

Vital, The Gate of Holiness: Sec. 2, Portal 2.

IT is good for the soul to have seasons of quiet contemplation and searching self-scrutiny. In the midst of a busy life, full of worry and distraction, of strenuous effort and burning heart-ache, it is good to pause at times and meditate in silence; for in such moments of self-communion the hidden realities of life call unto our deepest thoughts and feelings. At such times we seem able to sink below the surface and fathom the very depths of our existence. Baffling questions come crowding upon the mind; mysterious longings seize possession of the soul. Alone with our real self, in

the very presence of God, we begin to perceive the profound sea of mystery over which we are voyaging so gaily, and a spirit of humility comes over our thought. We feel ourselves so little, when compared with the immense universe in which we live. Our life hangs upon a mere thread. Like a vapor, it appears for a moment and then vanishes away. And yet, how great our power, how boundless the opportunities for spiritual growth! We contrast in our mind what we actually are with what we might be, and our heart sinks within us. A sense of unworthiness overwhelms us.

Such solemn sadness and profound seriousness are fraught with spiritual significance. They are revelations of sublime truth. We pass beyond our self. Instinctively we reach out our hands and lift our voices for the help of which we stand in such supreme need. We find ourselves face to face with God.

O Lord our God, as we lift our eyes unto the hills, whence shall our help come but from Thee? Thou who treadest the high places of the earth, Thou alone canst help us to struggle out of our complexities, to surmount our difficulties. In Thee alone can we find rest for our perturbed minds and disquieted hearts. In Thy light can we see light. We therefore approach Thee, O God, and lift our souls unto Thee, the fountain of our hope and strength. Grant us, we beseech Thee, the vision that shall enable us to see Thy larger purpose in the world and the divine possibilities Thou hast planted in our nature. In Thy Law Thou hast shown us the true plan and pattern of

our life. Give us also, we pray Thee, the strength of will, and the steadiness of purpose ever to strive to realize Thy vision of our possibilities and to fulfil Thine image of our life. Amen.

Morning Prayer

I lay me down and I sleep, I awake for the Lord sustaineth me. Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my God and my King, for unto Thee do I pray. O Lord in the morning shalt Thou hear my voice. In the morning will I order my prayer unto Thee, and will look forward. For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness. Evil shall not sojourn with Thee. The boasters shall not stand in Thy sight. But as for me, in the abundance of Thy lovingkindness I come into Thy house. I will bow down in Thy holy Temple in the fear of Thee.

Psalm 3, 6; 5, 2-6, 8.

At the dawn I seek Thee, Refuge, Rock sublime,
Set my prayers before Thee in the morning
And my prayer at eventime.

I, before Thy greatness, stand and am afraid.
All my secret thoughts Thine eye beholdeth,
Deep within my bosom laid.

And withal what is it, heart and tongue can do?
What is this my strength and what is even
This the spirit in me too?

But indeed man's singing may seem good to Thee.
So I praise Thee singing, while there dwelleth
Yet the breath of God in me.

Solomon Gabirol (12th Century) Translated by Nina Salaman.

THE simple tasks of every day require energy and faith. Daily duty with its inevitable repetition becomes irksome, and joyous tasks gradually turn into halfhearted toil. Time dampens our enthusiasm and in our weariness we be-

gin to doubt the value of our labors. Each new day when we are called upon to face the same tasks, we grow tired and our toil begins to seem futile, our achievements insignificant, and our ideals hopeless. It is the routine of life that saps the energies, dulls the courage and weakens faith.

In order that man continue his work in patience and in strength, he must try to infuse the spirit of his rare moments of creative joy into the routine of his common tasks. Our fathers understood this necessity for daily inspiration, and therefore they conceived of themselves as laboring in a great cause. God, they said, was their Employer and they labored in His workshop fulfilling His mighty plans. They strengthened themselves with the confident hope that any man, if he be patient, true and brave, may become the co-worker of God Himself in the creation and the maintenance of the world.

The unfailing strength of such an ideal is waiting for every man who seeks it. When man emerges every morning from the mystery of sleep into the bright daylight of waking life, let him begin the day with thanks to the God of all men, for life restored and strength renewed. Before he begins his daily tasks let him spend a moment in contemplation of the work of the divine Artisan who renews daily the wonders of His creation. Let him pray humbly for a share of the infinite creative power.

If man will begin his task with the reverent consciousness of God's presence, then even his humblest achievement will be holy unto the Lord. If man will strive with the beginning of each day

to make the day's work acceptable to God, then even if he fall short of full achievement, and even if his fellowmen deem his work to have failed, he will have succeeded in the sight of God, who sees the hearts of men. God will establish the work of his hands.

MASTER of the world, mighty Creator, how manifold are Thy works. In wisdom hast Thou created them, and in lovingkindness dost Thou constantly maintain them. Into our frail hearts hast Thou breathed Thy spirit, inspiring us to toil, and teaching us to worship Thee by the work of our hands. We thank Thee, O Father, for the impulse to labor; for the tasks which call upon our powers, for the countless opportunities to continue Thy creative work. We thank Thee for those moments of joy when we can look upon the work of our hands and truly say: Behold it is good.

Heavenly Master, at the dawn of a new day, hear our voice. Thou art the source of our strength. Unless Thou build our house, in vain do we toil. Without Thy presence we lose faith in our strength, our courage ebbs and difficulties defeat us. Before the toil of the day begins, we lay before Thee the meditations of our heart. May they be acceptable in Thy sight. We commend the results of our labor into Thy hands; may they be deemed worthy of Thine approval. Grant us, O divine Source of strength, the power to toil patiently and to hope for Thy blessing. May this day bring us nearer to Thee. Amen.

Starting Anew

Blessed be the Lord, day by day he beareth our burden, even the God who is our salvation.

For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.

Surely the Lord's mercies are not consumed. Surely, His compassions fail not. They are new every morning.

Turn us unto Thee, O Lord,—renew our days as of old.

Psalm 68, 20; Isaiah 65, 17-18; Lamentations 3, 22-24; 5, 21.

Praised be Thou who in Thy goodness renewest each day the wonders of creation. *The Prayerbook.*

Thou Judge of all the earth,
Making the world stand firm by right
I pray to Thee, give life and pity
Unto this people, humble in Thy sight;
And set the prayer at morning light
In place of sacrifice—
Even as the morning offering, the gift of every morn.
Make strong your hearts, my people,
In God your strength; take courage true—
For if indeed ye keep His statutes,
He, setting love against the thing ye do,
Will pardon your transgressions,
Remembering in His wrath to pity you.
O seek the Lord, seek ye His strength anew,
Seek ye His face for ever—
As with the morning offering, the gift of every morn.

Solomon Ben Abun, 12th Century (translated by Nina Salaman).

TOIL would be purposeless if the world were unchangeable. If there is nothing new under the sun, then what profit lies in all our work? If there is nothing that we can change, what can we hope to accomplish? When in hours of dejection we review the years, we seem to see them all alike, no new achievements, no new spirit; year after year the same disappointments and failures. When the history of our experiences repeats itself too closely and life brings nothing new, then even our success loses savor. Fortunately it is only the jaded eye of pessimism which cannot discern the living change and the infinite variety of our life. In reality no two things are exactly alike. No two days, no two hours, no two minutes are exactly alike. With every passing moment, the entire world changes. God constantly creates a new heaven and a new earth. The world is incessantly different from what it has been. The world is always new.

When once we perceive the vision of the changing world, our spiritual mood is transformed. We are chastened and also strengthened for there is both a solemn and a cheering implication in this thought. Its solemn implication is that we may never rest from labor. We must ever be up and doing, for no achievement is final. Yesterday's attainments may have been suited to yesterday's world, but today the world is re-made and different. Since it is a new world, behold there is a new work to do, new temptations to resist, new problems to solve! There can be no reclining on our laurels, no folding of our hands, no

luxuriating in the thought of the victory won.

The living variation of days and years, the endless changing of the world, has also a cheering implication. It proclaims that a new world is a world of fresh beginning and new opportunities. The world of yesterday's discouragements is no longer the world that we are living in today. Yesterday we may have lost the battle but today we fight anew—perhaps to win. We blundered yesterday. But the blunder may be remedied; because yesterday's world with its errors and missteps has passed. Today's page is sufficiently clean, ready to receive the writing of a new endeavor.

HEAVENLY Father, Everpresent Power, whose creative work is endless, the ancient days of creation were but the beginning of Thy work. When Thou openest our eyes to Thy power, we behold Thee maintaining the world, dwelling within it and renewing it daily with Thy love.

Thy constant presence, O Lord, is our strength. Since Thou art near, we call upon Thee, and pray that Thou renew our failing hearts as Thou renewest daily Thy wondrous works. Grant us new courage with the new day.

O assure us that yesterday's reverses have not broken us; that they have only given us added knowledge wherewith to grasp our problems more firmly; and that during the pause of the night, Thou hast granted us new wisdom and strength. May Thy presence in our hearts be our shield and buckler as we start the battle afresh. This day,

be it of defeat or of victory—may it be Thy day, O Lord. Create in us a stronger yearning for Thy presence so that, chance what will, we shall draw closer unto Thee, learning to know Thee with a fuller knowledge and to love Thee with a deeper and deeper love. Amen.

Daily Revelation

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night revealeth knowledge. There is no speech, there are no words, neither is their voice heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with glory and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; who layest the beams of Thine upper chambers in the waters, who makest the clouds Thy chariot, who walkest upon the wings of the wind; who makest winds Thy messengers, the flaming fire Thy ministers. *Psalm 19, 2-5; 104, 1-4*

There are men who boast of their deeds, doing little and saying much. There are men who, when they work, sound loud bells so that the report of their goodness be heard afar. To such, the heavens have no voice. The revelations of nature cannot be easily heard during the day when men move noisily about in their daily work. But in the evening when men sit in silence, the voice of the heavens may be heard.

Isaac Arama (15th Cent.) (Adapted from Akeda 1, 13b).

When the soul meditates upon the greatness of His might and His transcendant power, it bows before Him in awe and trembling. Then fear gives way to trust in Him, until the soul finds rest from all its terrors, and longs for the cup of God's love seeking to unite with Him in faith and yearning.

Bachya, 'Duties of the Heart' (11th Cent.) (Gate of Love, Chap. 1).

WE frequently realize that it is only the surface of life that we see; that our daily observations touch only a superficial aspect of nature and of the life of men; that back of the obvious manifestations of our world, are deeper laws which seem to escape us. We seem to know instinctively that behind the pettiness of men, there are evidences of their divinity; that above the clamor of the crowds may be heard the voice of humanity; beyond the pain of death is the promise of immortality; and in the endless motion of nature's machinery, lies the power of its Master, the God of the Universe.

We are vaguely aware of the spiritual laws imbedded in the plan of life, but we do not easily perceive them. For while obvious facts sound loudly in our ears, the soul of the world rests in silence. It does not clamor for our attention; there is no sound of it; its voice is not easily heard. The material facts of the world obtrude themselves upon us, but in order to find the spirit of the universe, we must earnestly seek. We must not expect sudden revelations. Indeed great truths frequently come in a flash of light, but only to those who have been bravely groping in the darkness.

God is within and all about us, yet we plod on in the daily round of life unaware of ever-present divinity. But if we summon our power to search for Him in our own experiences, in the souls of men, in the mysteries of nature, He will graciously cause the light of His countenance to shine upon us, and we will perceive at last, if only faintly, all of nature revealing His glory, the heavens to

the earth, the east unto the west, and day unto day.

LORD of all worlds, the heaven is Thy throne; Thou inhabitest eternity. Far beyond our feeble sight, Thou dwellest in majesty. O God of knowledge, Thou hast implanted within us a sense of Thy presence. Though we see Thee not, Thou hast taught us to search for Thee. Though in infinite distances Thou art enthroned, our humble earth is Thy footstool. Though Thou dwellest afar, Thou hast assured us that Thou wilt be near if we call unto Thee in truth.

O keep Thou within our frail hearts the thirst to know Thee. May we never falter till we find the living waters of Thy presence. Grant us the strength to seek Thee with prayer and thanksgiving. Send us forth to search for Thee in all Thy universe. Enhearten us with the hope that if we call Thee, Thou wilt be near; if we seek Thee we will find Thy presence.

Divine Source of light and truth, bless Thou our blinded sight. Grant a vision of Thee to those who yearn for Thy presence, so that familiar things may be transfigured for us, that we hear the melody of nature endlessly chanting of Thee, the silent speech of day unto day, and behold the revelations of the heavens declaring Thy glory. Amen.

The Sabbath

And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying: Speak thou also unto the children of Israel saying: Verily ye shall keep My Sabbath, for it is a sign between Me and you through your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord who sanctify you. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested.

Exodus 31; 12, 16, 17.

This day is for Israel light and rejoicing,
A Sabbath of rest.

Thou badest us standing assembled at Sinai,
That all the years through we should keep Thy behest.
To set out a table full-laden to honor,
The Sabbath of rest.

This day is for Israel light and rejoicing,
A Sabbath of rest.

Treasure of heart for the broken people,
Gift of new soul for the souls distrest,
Soother of sighs for the prisoned spirit,
The Sabbath of rest.

This day is for Israel light and rejoicing,
A Sabbath of rest.

When the work of the worlds in their wonder was finished,
Thou madest this day to be holy and blest,
And those heavy-laden find safety and stillness,

A Sabbath of rest.
This day is for Israel light and rejoicing,
A Sabbath of rest.
Attributed to Isaac Luria, 16th Century. Translated by Nina Davis.

THE splendor of lofty conceptions and the blessedness of a thousand joys dwell with the memory of the Sabbath day. Its observance is older than Israel itself; its roots lie at the foundations of the world. It tells of the victory of light over darkness, of order over chaos, and brings the undying promise that the Lord will reign for ever, creating, building, and breathing into human bodies a living spirit, sacred and indestructible.

The Sabbath is sacred. It is welcomed with a Kiddush, a Sanctification. It enters with the beauty of holiness, bringing a gift, an added measure of the spirit of God, transfiguring our daily life and emphasizing the features of our divinity.

The Sabbath is a day of joy,—joy of accomplishment, joy of well-earned repose, joy of the promise that if we have labored with God, we will find rest in His presence. Whenever we welcome her coming, 'Princess Sabbath' brings into our lives an echo of the creative word, the glory of an added holiness, and the joy of blessed rest.

We need the sustaining thought of God's creative power, for our age is despairing and weary. We should seek an added holiness, for disillusionment has tarnished the splendor of our dreams; and how welcome should be a day of joy and serenity in our treadmill of labor and grief.

Difficult it is, indeed, to observe the Sabbath; yet it is equally difficult to live without its blessings. We cannot remake our environment, the life around us, but we can snatch from its insatiable demands, moments of blessedness. Whatever measure of Sabbath joy we can win for ourselves, will hallow our lives. Whether we take the blessed ceremony of its joyous advent, or the refreshing calm of its synagog service, the Sabbath will renew our strength, enrich our souls with a clearer vision, and calm our spirits with the quiet happiness of peace.

LORD of all worlds, whose mighty word brought light into the darkness, Thou hast created us and formed us. Thou didst mould us as clay is moulded in the hands of the potter, and hast breathed into our souls part of Thy spirit. Thou didst bid us walk in Thy footsteps, to become coworkers with Thee in Thy creation. We thank Thee, O God, for that eternal command, for the joy of worthy labor and the blessing of hallowed rest; for the toil of the week which invites our strength and for the serenity of the Sabbath which renews our soul.

Heavenly Father, have mercy upon us, for we have neglected Thine ancient behest. We toil indeed, arduously and ceaselessly, but we fail to seek the refreshment of rest in Thee. Six days do we labor, but the Sabbath often remains unhallowed. Lord, Thou knowest our lives, their struggles and their temptations. We have no strength but in Thee. Grant us the power, we pray Thee, to seek

Thy presence more eagerly than we pursue earthly gain. Bid us partake of Thy blessings and to 'know that the Lord is good'. Hallow our homes that they may become fit habitations for Thy holy day. Direct our steps unto Thy holy place. O fill the portion of the Sabbath which Thou hast preserved for us, with Thy spirit, that its joy may revive us, and its sanctity bring us a sacred moment of nearness to Thee.

Rejoice in the Lord

Shout unto the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, He is God; it is He that hath made us, and we are His, His people, and the flock of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His court with praise; give thanks unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy endureth for ever; and His faithfulness unto all generations.

Psalm 100

When you arise to pray, let your heart be glad within you, for you are serving a God beyond compare.

Midrash, (Yalkut to Psalm 100).

Know thou, that whenever there rises upon the heart of men a sudden joyous thought, or a feeling of happiness, or a sense of love for God's law and commandments, that very moment is auspicious for prayer; and a prayer then uttered will reach upward to the presence of the Holy King of Kings.

Hirsch Kaidanover, 18th Cen. ("Righteous Measure," 71, 8).

IT is natural for us to seek God in times of sorrow. When we are unhappy we feel our loneliness and long for His comfort and sympathy. Nor do we yearn in vain, for He giveth strength to the weary, and courage to the despondent. Our first religious experience often comes as we grow aware of His hovering presence consoling us in sorrow.

Yet a faith based upon such experiences alone, is sombre and incomplete. God reveals Himself in many ways, and His nature appears different to us as the angle of our vision varies. So we

should seek Him in all the changing experiences of our life. Joyous moments may just as well reveal God to us as hours of saddened loneliness. Deep happiness can make us peculiarly receptive to His word. Joy expands the heart, opens the doors of generosity, and arouses a sense of gratitude. Happiness can be an ideal pathway to God's throne. In time of rejoicing, therefore, the exulting spirit should strive upward. Our lips should learn not only prayers of resignation, but words of praise and songs of gladness. We have often prayed to Him with bruised spirits. Now let the voice of joy and salvation rise up to Him from the tents of His children.

HEAVENLY Father, the morning stars sing together, the heavens rejoice, the earth is glad, and the sons of men chant unto Thee a new song. Joy pervading all the earth comes as a blessed gift from Thee. Thou biddest the sun to beam over the smiling earth and Thou lightest up our hearts with gladness. Whenever our souls rejoice may we learn to feel our kinship with all Thy natural servants and to grow aware of Thy benignant grace glowing within us.

Admit us into Thy presence in time of joy, O heavenly Father, lest our laughter become lawless, our happiness unruly and our hearts estranged from Thee. We rise to seek Thee, that our joys may be hallowed with Thee at hand to bless them, that our happiness be deepened, and that with lands and oceans, the stars and the infinite spaces, we join Thy celestial chorus of joyous adoration. Amen.

Sincerity

Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart.

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

For there is no sincerity in their mouths; their inward part is a yawning gulf, their throat is an open sepulchre; they make smooth their tongue.

Psalm 15, 1-2; Joshua 24, 14; Psalm 5, 10.

No man's prayer is given hearing, unless when he raises his hands to heaven in prayer, he also raises his whole soul heavenward in his hands; for Scripture saith (Lam. 3, 40), "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens".

Talmud (Taanit, 8a)

Scripture says that the brothers were unable to speak peaceably with Joseph, yet in the very shame of their anger there was a virtue—(they were sincere); what was in their heart was on their lips.

Midrash (Gen. R., 84, 9)

Every disciple whose inward thoughts do not correspond with his outward behavior is no true disciple of the sages.

Talmud (Yoma, 72b)

OUR natural sympathy with our common human frailties often gives way when we find ourselves confronted by any form of treachery,

hypocrisy and insincerity. We are willing at times, especially when extenuating circumstances exist, to condone wrongs however flagrant; but we are ever the implacable foes of sham and double-mindedness. When the false, the faithless, the insincere cross our path, seeking to deceive us, when we discover that the sentiments of their hearts are contrary to the language of their mouths, our wrath is kindled, our soul is set ablaze with indignation.

And it is right that this should be so. For what is sincerity? It is nothing more nor less than wholeness of character. It implies absolute genuineness, free from the thinnest veneer of concealment. In our associations with men and women, we do right when we seek to be sure that they are genuine, wholesouled; that they mean what they say and their words are not the mere gloss of superficial feeling; that their actions are free from any cloak of pretence. At the heart of all of us lies the conviction that sincerity is not a special grace, a mere adornment of the soul, but that it enters into the very structure of character. Insincerity is the sure index of a double life, a shattered, disintegrated personality. There can be no honesty, no real truthfulness, unless there be sincerity in thought. Sincerity is not merely a virtue; it is the essence of all virtues. Only when our whole life is true and pure is sincerity possible.

O Lord our God, as we turn our thought to Thee and Thy great truths, we become conscious of the unity of life amidst all its diversities. By

Thy grace it has been given us to see that Thy spirit pervades the entire realm of nature and every nook and corner of our own inner being. We yearn, O God, to become at one with Thee, to live in harmony with Thine immutable Law. Help us, O Father, we pray Thee, to attain unto wholeness of life. Create in us a pure heart, a heart that is spotless and clean, free from dross and counterfeit. May we ever be honest in word, in thought, in deed. Purify us, Thou who art the source of all purity, that we may be able to make sincerity the controlling influence of our lives. O let Thy light and Thy truth ever lead us, that through us others may rise to a deeper knowledge of Thy truth and all-encompassing love. Thou, who desirest truth in the inward parts, teach us so to live that our inner life will need no concealment but will ever shine forth in radiant purity and nobility.

Rosh Hashanah–The New Year

So teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom.

Who can discern errors, clear Thou me from hidden faults. Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins that they may not have dominion over me; then shall I be faultless and I shall be clear of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable before Thee, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer, *Psalm 90, 12; 19, 13-15*

Praise Him trembling today, His mercy is wide;
Ye who fear for His wrath, it doth not abide!
Ye seraphim, high above storm clouds, may sing;
Men and angels make music, the All-seeing is king.
As ye open your lips, at His Name they shall cease
Transgressions and sin—in their place shall be peace;
And thrice shall the Shophar re-echo your song
On mountains and altar, to whom both belong.
Elazar Kalir, (8th Century) Translated by Katie Magnus.

The three groups of verses after which the Shofar is sounded on the New Year express three ideas: first, God's sovereignty (Malchioth), then God's remembrance of His children (Zichronoth), and the trumpet sound of deliverance (Shofroth).

Why have our sages arranged these ideas in precisely this order? It is for the purpose of teaching you first to proclaim that God is your King, then to bid you plead for His compassion that He may be mindful of you when the trumpet is sounded for deliverance.

Sifre (to Numbers 10, 10)

THE recurring New Year brings a lesson of hope. No sin stains for ever, no punishment is eternal. We need not wait for an ultimate judgment day, when final reckoning is made, and from whose dread decision there is no appeal. Each year of life brings its own accusation and its punishment, its own restoration and healing. Though life be wearied with iniquity, it may be renewed with hope. Each New Year the trumpet sounds, bidding man forsake the folly of his careless days and acquire the wisdom of righteousness.

We summon the days of the year out of the past and bid them stand before the saddened eyes of memory. Humbly we see the wrongs we have done, for there is none so righteous on earth that he sinneth not. We recall our angers and our tyrannies, our haughtiness and our pride, our harshness and injustice—all the sins that we have committed. And now we come before our Father and our King, pleading for His forgiveness, and praying for His guidance that we may learn how to live in His presence.

Not all our iniquities are manifest. Many of them are hidden even from ourselves. Unknowingly we have wounded the suffering, and flaunted our strength before the weak. Frequently our heart within us has muttered iniquity, and we knew it not. Only to God are all secret things revealed. We must call unto Him for deliverance, lest the hidden sins within us gather in strength and, emboldened by their power, come out into the daylight and win sudden dominion over us. If we seek His help, He will cleanse us from hid-

den faults. He is the source of strength, as merciful as He is omnipotent. He will teach us to number our days, and aid us to make the words of our lips and the mysterious meditation of our hearts acceptable unto Him.

O Thou who art timeless, our frail hearts, tossed on the billows of time, need anchorage in Thee. The Shofar blast of this day awakeneth thoughts of judgment. Lord, Thy judgment is mercy, for Thou art the righteous Judge. Though man doth misjudge, Thou art ever just. When, beneath the misunderstandings and misjudgments of men, hearts are in pain, O be Thou the Comforter, Thou all-seeing One, who knowest all, who understandest all.

We would learn, O our Father, to judge ourselves aright. We would judge aright concerning our own purposes and motives, oft so hidden, so elusive; for the heart is deceitful above all things; it is exceedingly weak—who can know it? We would cease to be deceived by our unexalted and selfish lives, blindly deeming them to be unselfish and exalted. O dispel Thou our delusions. Cause every unworthy purpose in our hearts to stand undisguised before the eye of conscience that we may nevermore mistake darkness for light or bitter for sweet.

We would also learn to judge aright concerning our fellow-men. We would cease to confuse that which we imagine with that which is. May all that we have suffered because others have misjudged us discipline us and impel us to take heed lest we

ourselves misjudge. The motives, circumstances, necessities whereby others do as they do—how impenetrably are they hidden from our sight! Teach us, O Merciful One, to judge in mercy that we may seek justice, reverence truth, and be prepared to grant to others the pardon that we seek from Thee.

Thou Infinite Justice, the passion for justice is the worship of Thee. O lift us above the storms of fretfulness into the calm of the spirit, out of the restlessness of time into the peace of eternity. Inscribe us in the book of character and consecration, yea, in the book of the soul's perfected life. Amen.

Justice

Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

Justice, justice shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and as for princes, they shall rule in justice.

Thou shalt not curse the deaf nor place a stumbling block before the blind.

But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Psalm 97, 2; Deut. 16, 20; Isaiah 32, 1; Lev. 19, 14; Amos 5, 24.

These are the ordinances. God said unto them, Whatever I do is done in justice. Were I to deviate from justice but once the world would cease to exist.

Midrash, (Tanhuma ed. Buber to Exod. 21, 1)

The world rests upon three things; upon truth, upon justice and upon peace. All these three are really one, for when justice is done, the truth becomes an actuality, peace a reality.

Talmud, (Jerus. Taanith 4, 2)

God said unto Israel: Verily, My children, it is when you observe justice that I am most exalted.

Midrash (Deut. Rab. 5, 7.)

IT is not a mere fancy of the human mind to compare justice to the scales of the balance that show the perfect poise. Even as the planets are held in their path by the power of attraction and repulsion perfectly balanced, so is this world

of men saved from confusion and collapse by justice that holds in poise the balance of life. Justice defines the true relation of things. It is not the man-made enactment of legislatures; it is the law of God planted in the bosom of nature and rooted in the heart of man.

To tamper with justice is to create antagonism and strife. Justice is our friend, our ally, in all that makes for human happiness. It makes secure our life and property; it brings to us peace and joy and enlargement of soul. There can be no true happiness, there can be no true usefulness, without justice. All virtues, all graces, wait upon it. Justice is not the antithesis of love; it is love in action. It is truth at work. It is applied honesty. Unlike other virtues, it does not deal with the self; it represents our relation to our kind. Whether it be between man and man, or between men and men; whether it be between individuals or groups of individuals; justice seeks to maintain harmony and peaceful relations. How soon all wars would cease, all strife, all exploitation and oppression disappear, were justice permitted to exercise its divine function, to balance the forces of life!

OUR God and Father, Thou who rulest the world in wisdom and justice, we lift our souls unto Thee in prayer and praise and thanksgiving. We praise Thee for the sense of justice which Thou hast implanted within us, and which ever seeks, though at times haltingly and gropingly, to express itself in the daily relations of life. We

thank Thee for the inspired teachers of our people who have taught us that Thou dost maintain the eternal order of the universe and that we are co-workers with Thee in the creation of order and peace in the world of human kind.

Be with us, O God, as we strive to do Thy will. Teach us to see that the men and women about us are our brothers and sisters, that when we hurt the least of them we disturb the moral order of this world. Fill us with an ardent love for all Thy creatures that we may never be tempted to wrong them, to exploit their labor or services, or to take unfair advantage of anyone's weakness or want or ignorance. Kindle in us a passion for doing only that which is just and honorable. Grant us the vision to see that only justice can endure, and that only in being just to one another can we make our lives acceptable to Thee. Help us by our thoughts and deeds to hasten the day when wrong and violence shall cease and justice be established in the gate. Amen.

God Our Refuge

The Lord also will be a high tower for the oppressed,
A high tower in time of trouble;
And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee;
For Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.

Keep me, O God; for I have taken refuge in Thee.
I have said unto the Lord: 'Thou art my Lord;
I have no good but in Thee';

God is our refuge and our strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas;

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose trust the Lord is.
For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but its foliage shall be luxuriant; and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Psalm 9, 10-11; 16, 1-2; 46, 2-3; Jeremiah 17, 7-8.

The noblest fruit of the tree of prayer is communion with God, which, when a man partaketh of it, bringeth life eternal. Now behold the words of the prophet Jeremiah: Blessed is the man that trusteth in God, he shall be like a tree, that will not fear heat or drought, and will never cease from bearing fruit. Behold he compareth reliance upon God to a well planted tree, which sendeth forth its roots by the streams of faith. Such a soul will not worry over the misfortunes of the time; it will never cease to

bear the noblest of fruits; fellowship with God, and life in the radiance of Divine Glory.

Isaac Arama, 15th Cent. (Adapted from Akeda, Chap. 58, P. 13b)

WE can not maintain for ever the valor of our hopefulness. Some day, the sun suddenly becomes overcast, the winds rise ominously. The tempest of trouble bursts in full fury over the ship of life, and all of our fond hopes for a peaceful voyage seem to have vanished for ever. No heart can be made proof against storms. Misery and disappointments will surely come to every man. On those dark days, the success upon which we have proudly relied seems to be trivial, and even our smallest failures seem to grow to disastrous size.

When despair enters the heart, no human aid can wholly expel it. The sun of life has become darkened, what can restore the light? We lack the power to reason our way back to courage. Our vision is now blinded. We are afraid and impatient. No argument, no human encouragement will avail. We need a refuge, a quiet land-locked harbor, where, in the serene presence of infinity, we can find rest.

To rest in the Lord, we must first earnestly seek the eternal Refuge. The Lord of Peace has, indeed, the blessing of peace for us, but He does not burden us with unsought comfort. His words will renew hope, but we must first listen eagerly before He speaks to us. We must yearn for Him, and turn to Him, and seek Him in times of despair. Having found Him we will have found peace; and

having rested in the peace of His presence, found serenity of mind and hope renewed.

HEAVENLY Father, we seek refuge in Thee. We seek rest and peace for we are tossed by storms. We seek strength and courage, for we have lost hope. Days have come when only Thou canst help us. Be Thou with us when our days darken; when our toil seems vain, and our friends far away; when we are alone and have none but Thee.

We remember Thy words of old: "Seek Me and live." Keep within us, O our Father, the thirst to know Thee, that we may ever seek Thee. Sorrow and disappointments have humbled us. O be Thou near to the broken and the contrite heart. We search for Thee; bring us into Thy presence. None can aid but Thee; send us Thy help. We trust in Thee for ever. Amen.

Out of the Depth

Out of the depths have I called unto Thee, O Lord. Lord hearken to my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? For with Thee is forgiveness that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than watchmen for the morning; yea, more than watchmen for the morning.

Psalm 130, 1-6.

Saith the congregation of Israel unto the Lord: "I am well beloved of Him even when I sink into the deepest trouble; for God raiseth me from my grief, and I flower in righteousness as the lily, and utter songs of praise unto Him."

Midrash (Song of Songs 2, 3.)

Repentance waiteth patiently at all times for the sons of men. When can a man be purified of iniquity? When he returneth to the King on High, and uttereth prayer from the depths of his heart, as Scripture saith: Out of the depths I call unto Thee.

Book of Splendor (End of 13th Cent.) (Zohar III, 69b)

THOUGH sages have taught men not to judge each other harshly, to be tolerant of each other, yet all men know well that the lesson has remained unlearned. All men have felt the pain of the world's scorn, for there is no man that sinneth not. The world, ready with its praise for success, pours out its merciless rebuke upon the unfortunate. Few men receive human pity for their iniquities.

Should harsh circumstance or unfortunate weakness lead man into flagrant wrongdoing, he will often plumb the very depths of misery. The world despises him, yet he cannot flee from the contempt of men, because even in himself he finds no pity. Conscience, once the guide of his life, now bitterly rebukes him. Scorned of men, in shame before his own soul, he loses heart. Courage vanishes, self respect weakens, despair adds its burden to iniquity.

God, who has no delight in human power, has no contempt for human weakness. To His endless might, even the greatest are weak. He looks upon all men alike in lovingkindness, even as a father pitieth his children. Men judge by the outward sight, the Lord judges the heart. He pities weakness, He is aware of all hidden temptations, He is gentle with human frailty, and He forgives sin, re-creating the broken man, granting a new heart and a clean soul.

When man has sinned grievously, when he is rejected of his fellowmen, and despised in his own heart, let him approach God humbly and reverently, but without fear. God is near to the humble. His mercies endure for ever.

HEAR our voice when we call unto Thee, O God of righteousness. Men have looked upon our transgressions; they have mocked us and cast us away. Out of the depths we lift up our eyes to Thine eternal hills and call in trembling upon Thy name.

Men may recall all our failings, and recount to each other all our shortcomings. Yet we will not heed the tongues of men, if we can but escape into the awesome silence of Thy presence. If Thou shouldst ever mark against us our transgressions we could never stand before Thee. But with Thee is forgiveness. In Thine eternal mercy, Thou pitiest our weakness, and even our faintest strivings after Thee, Thou rememberest in love.

Redeem us, O Lord, by Thy help, for in Thee alone do we trust. Create us anew by Thy word. Let there be light in our darkness. More than the watchman waiteth for the morning do we wait for Thee. Be Thou near to us, and teach us to call upon Thee in truth. Amen.

God's Love

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father hath compassion upon his children, so hath the Lord compassion upon them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.

But the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.

For the Lord is righteous, He loveth righteousness.
O ye that love the Lord, hate evil.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might.

Psalm 103, 11-14; Deut. 23, 6; Psalm 11, 7; 97, 10; Deut. 6, 5.

When all within is dark,
And former friends misprise;
From them I turn to Thee,
And find love in Thine eyes.

When all within is dark,
And I my soul despise;
From me I turn to Thee,
And find love in Thine eyes.

When all Thy face is dark,
And Thy just angers rise;
From Thee I turn to Thee,
And find love in Thine eyes.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol, 11th Century (Adapted by I. A.)

ONLY an infinite love, lavishly generous and ever-true, can melt away the barriers dividing human hearts. Our blindness and our selfishness drive us far apart. How isolated we really are! How pitiful is our caution in our relations to one another! "The proud waters of wrath overwhelm our souls." We mock and scorn each other. We are attacked and we bitterly retaliate. We are so hopelessly enmeshed in the net of personal interests, that we well may wonder, whence can come our help? We cannot rely upon the policies of worldly wisdom to bring us peace. We need a deliverance, a new vision, a glimpse of God's love, merciful and endless, patient and of infinite lovingkindness. When once we grow aware of the boundless love we are daily receiving, our rancor will vanish, and we will learn to bestow generously the love which we abundantly receive. God's love is shining through the world, conquering the hearts of men.

God's love brings us His mercy; He is just, but He is more than just. His justice establishes the world; His love blesses it continually. When we ask that God reward our toil, and crown our uncompleted lives with immortality, we are invoking His justice; and yet we tremble at its coming when we realize the extent of our sin and wilful rebellion. Then, pleading like erring children, we turn to His love, knowing that He is our Father as well as our King.

From the quarrels of men, from our own dark impulses which give them birth, and even from the just decrees of God's own judgment, we turn

to God's love, in the hope that it will awaken in us a response, our love for Him. In our souls, once they are awakened unto love, hatred cannot abide, and we learn to come from the fields of discord unto the Tabernacle of Peace.

FATHER, gracious and compassionate, who sendest Thy love unto thousands of generations, be Thou our help! We do not rely upon our merits, for then, in justice, Thou couldst reject us utterly. Let Thy blessings come unto us as an unearned gift from Thee, our Father. Let Thy compassion be manifest, so that when we err, we may receive mercy, and when we are misjudged, we may forgive.

Draw us nigh unto Thee that we may love Thee, and from love of Thee rejoice in Thy service. Make Thou our hearts the channel for the stream of Thy love, so that, having been sustained by Thy patience, we may be patient; having received Thy bounty, we may be bountiful; and having been blessed by Thy love, we may obey Thy behest to love our neighbor as ourselves. May we walk in the paths of Thy lovingkindness, bearing no illwill, forgiving hatred, and growing like Thee, gracious and compassionate. Amen.

Ignorance and Evil

The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Therefore My people are gone into captivity for want of knowledge.

That the soul be without knowledge is not good.

Happy is the man whom Thou instructest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law; that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of evil.

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.

Hosea 4, 1; Isaiah 5, 13; Prov. 19, 2; Psalm 94, 12, 13; Jer. 31, 33, 34.

All the great evils which men cause to each other originate in ignorance, which is absence of wisdom. A blind man, for example, who has no guide, stumbles constantly, because he cannot see, and causes injury to others. In the same manner, various classes of men, each man in proportion to his ignorance, bring great evils upon themselves and upon other individual members of the species.

If men possessed wisdom, which stands in the same relation to the form of man as the sight to the eye, they would not cause any injury to themselves or to others; for the knowledge of truth removes hatred and quarrels and prevents mutual injuries.

Maimonides, 12th Century (Guide, part III, Ch. XI, trans. Friedlander)

IGNORANCE contributes to every type of evil. Although there are some who know the good yet consciously choose evil, yet most of us fall into the captivity of sin merely through lack of knowledge. We sin against our health through ignorance of physical laws; we sin against society through blindness to the laws of social progress; we sin against our heavenly Father by failing to understand what He doth require of us.

"An ignorant man," say the Rabbis, "cannot be truly righteous." He who does not know his own nature or the nature of his fellow men, blunders into errors and injustice. The first step out of evil must be made in the direction of enlightenment. We must seek to discover the true motives of our fellow men, so as never to sin by misjudging them. We must learn the laws of our souls so as to live lives worthy of our innate divinity. We must meditate on God's laws, so as to make our own will harmonize with His.

When we glimpse even a vestige of God's purposes, then we learn how to receive our good fortune in gratitude, and never fall into the sin of vainglory; we accept pain in patience, avoiding the iniquities of bitterness and rebellion. As knowledge of the laws of science will abolish many physical ills, so knowledge of the laws of God will cure men of anger, selfishness and hatred. The age of universal peace and brotherhood, will be born of a deepened understanding—'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.'

LORD, God of Knowledge, no human thought is hidden from Thee. Man's pretensions to knowledge are vain, and his boasted wisdom is empty in the light of Thine omniscience.

O Father, I have foolishly confounded good and evil, the true and the false; and now in my darkness I turn my thoughts to Thee in whom there is no ignorance and no evil. Send forth Thy light that it may lead me. Grant that Thy truth may have free access to my mind. Deepen within me the love of knowledge. Enlighten me with true understanding that I may check evils by discovering their source.

Teach me to understand Thy beneficence that I may never rebel against Thy word. Make me conscious of the brotherhood of all Thy children that I may be delivered from the sin of hatred. Grant me a glimpse of Thy gracious purposes that I may never despair. O lead me from the knowledge of Thy will to a fuller knowledge of Thee, Thou ultimate reality, infinite and eternal. Amen.

Conciliation

When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

A soft answer turneth away wrath, but a grievous word stirreth up anger.

Leave off contention before the quarrel break out.

Do good, seek peace and pursue it.

Proverbs 16, 7; 15, 1; 17, 14; Psalms 34, 14.

The followers of the sages augment peace in the world.

Talmud, (Beracot, 64a)

One of the things having fruitage both in this world and in the hereafter is the act of conciliating men with one another.

Talmud, (Peah, I)

One of the world's three pedestals is peace.

Ethics of the Fathers, (1)

They who are contemned but contemn not others; who hear themselves reproached but make no reply, whose every act is love, who cheerfully bear their afflictions, are the ones described in the scriptural verse: "God's lovers are like the sun in his might." *Talmud, (Sabbath, 88b)*

IN a world abounding in diversities of temperaments, environments and experiences, spontaneous harmony between individuals and nations is rare. The temptation to quarrel is inevitable. Unless there be conciliation there can be no peace.

The longer a contention has lasted the harder does yielding become, hence the Scripture bids us "leave off contention before the quarrel break out." The best time for yielding is before the

strife has made headway. In warfare whether between individuals or between nations, the original grievance is soon obscured amid the growing accumulation of incriminations and recriminations, retaliations and reprisals. The fire of contention feeds upon itself until it is beyond control. We must conciliate at the outset before conciliation grows too difficult.

Our elemental selfishness and impulsiveness are obstacles to peace. Too seldom do we reflect that if yielding be disagreeable for us, it is no less disagreeable for others.

Another obstacle to peace is the confusion of it with fear. We are readily deluded into the assumption that yielding is cowardice. Sometimes indeed men do yield because of cowardice; but more frequently it is because of cowardice that they refuse to yield; for what form of cowardice is more prevalent than the fear of being thought a coward! Let us yield for the sake of peace. There will then be no occasion to yield because of fear.

There are, of course, fundamental convictions in religion and morals upon which there may be no yielding. Rarely, however, do these convictions lead us into strife, while often, when we assert that we are battling for our principles, the searching of our hearts may reveal that not our principles but our vanities are the object of our contention.

When our holiest convictions are assailed, and there can be no yielding, there can still be a conciliation, namely the conciliation of suffering, the

willingness to endure for the sake of peace. Suffering obviates strife and thus becomes conciliation at its noblest.

O ETERNAL One, who makest peace in Thy high places, send peace unto Thy children. Teach me to love peace and to seek to establish it. Strengthen me to forgive wrongdoing. Teach me to endure for the sake of Thy name. I contemplate the holy men and martyrs by whom the world has been glorified, and I pray that my life be touched by their influence. My personal prerogatives—how unimportant! Peace among men —how vastly important! Conciliation not from fear but in the fearless quest of peace, O make this my aim, Thou Eternal One, that peace may increase in the world and the choice fruits of peace be reaped by all Thy children. Amen.

God is Near

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

Thou art nigh, O Lord, and all Thy commandments are truth.

For thus saith the High and Lofty One,
That inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy;
I dwell in the high and lofty place,
With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of the contrite ones.

The Lord is nigh to all that call upon Him; to all that call upon Him in truth.

Isaiah 55, 6; Psalm 22, 12; 119, 151; Isaiah 57, 14; Psalm 145, 18.

Fain would my heart come nigh
To Thee, O God on high,
But evil thoughts have led me astray
From the pure path of righteous government.

Guide Thou me back into Thy holy way,
And count me not as one impenitent.
O would that I might be
A servant unto Thee,
Thou God by all adored!

Then, though by friends outcast,
Thy hand would hold me fast,
And draw me near to Thee, my King and Lord.

Contrite and full of dread,
I mourn each moment fled,
'Midst idle follies roaming desolate;
I seek beneath transgressions manifold,

That from Thy presence keep me separate,
Nor can sin-darkened eyes Thy light behold.
O would that I might be
A servant unto Thee,
Thou God by all adored!
Then, though by friends outcast,
Thy hand would hold me fast,
And draw me near to Thee, my King and Lord.

So lead me that I may
Thy sovereign will obey.
Make pure my heart to seek Thy truth divine;
When burns my wound be Thou with healing near!
Answer me, Lord! For sore distress is mine,
And say unto Thy servant, I am here.
O would that I might be
A servant unto Thee,
Thou God by all adored!
Then, though by friends outcast,
Thy hand would hold me fast,
And draw me near to Thee, my King and Lord.

*Jehuda Halevi 11th-12th Cent. (transl. by Alice Lucas)**

THE very thought of the greatness of God, leads us at times to think of Him as dwelling far away. He is too great, we think, to concern Himself with little things, with unimportant man, with the trivial experiences of every day. Yet in truth it is the greatness of God which makes Him near unto us. For just as nothing is too difficult for His power, so nothing is too small for His omniscience and His love. His mercy shines into the farthest corners of the universe. He 'giveth

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food to the young ravens which cry'; He is near to the needy and the lowly. It was not in the storm or in the earthquake that Elijah found God, but in the still small voice. God is everywhere, far and near, in the infinities of the universe and in the chambers of the heart; in the mighty events which astound us, and in the song of a bird, the beauty of a flower and the smile of a child. His spirit is in the mission of a prophet and in the glory of a hero, and also in the love, service, joy and gratitude of humble men and women. Neither time nor distance limit God's love and help.

God is near when we bring Him near; He is far when we depart from Him. When we shout down the voice of duty, when we disregard God's law, when we shut our hearts to Him, then He seems to be far away, 'high and lofty, inhabiting eternity.' But when we seek Him, when His words are in our heart, and we meditate on them day and night, then 'God is nigh to those who call upon Him, who call upon Him in truth.'

O INFINITE Lord, the heavens and the earth cannot contain Thee, much less the temples which men build. Thy being is timeless. What vision can the brief moment of the life of men give them of Thy reality. Yet in Thy majestic love Thou dost approach them, and in Thy mercy dost Thou lift up Thy countenance to illumine the places where they assemble to praise Thy name. Whenever Thy children call upon Thee, Thou revealest Thy presence.

Merciful Father, keep me near unto Thee. Thou art ever by my side, but I, alas, often flee from Thy presence. O let not the cloud of my mortal weakness, my selfishness and my discord shut out Thy light from me. Be Thou with me in all my undertakings. Keep me conscious of Thee, so that, when temptation comes, I may remain firm, when danger threatens, I may not lose heart, and when I walk through the valley of the shadow, I shall not fear, for Thou art with me. Amen.

Yom Kippur--The Day of Atonement

Be gracious unto me, O God, according to Thy mercy; according to the multitude of Thy compassions, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight. That Thou mayest be justified when Thou speakest, and be right when Thou judgest.

Teach me, O Lord, Thy way that I may walk in Thy truth; make one my heart to fear Thy name.

I will thank Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart;
I will glorify Thy name for evermore.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Psalm 51, 3-6; 86, 11-12; Isaiah 1, 18.

The Day of Atonement will atone for the sins between man and God, but as for sins between man and his neighbor, the Day of Atonement will not atone for them, unless he makes peace with his neighbor. Said Rabbi Akiba: Happy are ye, O Israel, that it is your Father in heaven who purifies you. *Mishna (Yoma VIII, 8)*

Ah, verily, not one of us is just!
Thy myriad mercies save us from the dust;
Lo, unto Thee we stretch our guilty hands,
And in Thy holy Name we put our trust.

We put our trust, for 'tis our soul's delight
To seek in humbleness our shield of might;

Thy strength is all the refuge of the poor,
And lowly souls Thou placest on the height.

On Thee alone must rest the hope of man,
Iniquities Thou wilt not strictly scan;
Lo! God, the righteous, loves not punishment,
His ways transcend the little human plan.

From soul affliction did I comfort win,
Confessing every public, private sin;
Lo! This is the appointed Judgment Day,
A covenant eternal set within.

(Simon B. Isaac of Mayence—10th Century) Translated by I. Zangwill.

MANY are the pathways to God. Some come near unto Him in the meditations of solitude, some mount upon the wings of thankfulness; others find Him through the discipline of sorrow. Many men have found the way into His presence by walking in the path of righteousness. Surely upon this road, His law is a light unto our feet, and His eternal example, an inspiration. When we seek to be merciful as He is merciful, and to be holy as He is holy, we come near unto Him. We feel His blessed Presence, and, in humble peace, walk with God.

Sin estranges man from God. It is not that the eternal Father abandons His erring child, but rather that man, conscious of his wrongdoing, flees from the divine presence. The radiance of His countenance which once illumined the path of life, now becomes a blinding light, and man, in terror, covers himself with darkness. Yet whither

can he flee from the divine Presence? Where can he hide from God's light? He cannot hide from himself, and in his own heart there remains a ray of divinity, accompanying him in all his wanderings, shaming the darkness of iniquity. Whenever man struggles against God's law, he is at war with his own spirit. His heart is divided against itself. Conscience and sin, virtue and iniquity, light and darkness battle within him. He finds no peace.

The heart cannot live divided; yet it cannot be united except in God. Let man pray that the Lord purify him from evil and unite his heart to worship Him. No partial allegiance will ever bring peace. Let man seek the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul. Only thus may he become a fit instrument for God's will, a whole offering which will be acceptable unto the Lord.

O ETERNAL One, the contemplation of Thy unity awakens within our being the longing to unify our hearts. Each of us in his finiteness is a discord of conflicting impulses. In the serenity of Thy presence we seek to surmount the discords and conflicts within us and around us, becoming one even as Thou art one. For this atonement, this at-one-ment, our soul crieth out.

Our thoughts are not at one; behold the darkness of our ignorance. Our desires are not at one; alas, the tortuous mazes of sin! Yet our very agony assures us of Thy mercy; for this we can see through the mists and the tears: that, since sin brings such anguish, righteousness must be

our destiny; and since endless unrest masters us when our thoughts and longings fail to have unity, fail to harmonize, to be at one, Thy one-ness must be the image in which our souls are made.

We implore Thee, "seal us in the book of life." Behold, the book is within us, the book of the spirit's life. Zeal and power have been given us to grapple with the forces of death. Though strength should fail, courage need not fail. Steadfastness need not fail. Sealed unto life, may we never yield our battle with all that destroyeth.

We implore Thee, "pardon and blot out our sins." Thy gracious instrument of pardon is our own throbbing discontent with sin. We pray for the blotting out of our inclination to sin, for that is the evidence of Thy pardon. O better the fast day of hungering after the unattained high and good than the feast day of contentment with the unworthy and low. May our entire life, from the eventide when we were not, to the eventide of Death's Shofar call, be consecrated to this atoning quest.

Truly the work must have its aim and the journey its goal. In the academy on high—'garments are always white.' We who, in earthly life, are discordantly manifold shall yet array ourselves, transcending life, in the gleaming robes of perfected love and peace, having found consummate atonement, having merged and lost ourselves in Thine unfathomable unity. Amen.

God's Bounty

O Lord, the portion of mine inheritance and my cup. Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord who hath given me council; yea, in the night seasons, my reins instruct me. I have set the Lord always before me; surely He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. *Psalm 16, 5-8.*

As for the man who relies upon the Lord, no abundance of wealth will ever diminish his trust in God, for he does not rely upon his wealth. He considers it to be merely a security left with him, to be used in a definite manner, for specific purposes, and for a limited time. If his wealth remain with him, he will never become proud and forget his duty to those whom God commands him to befriend, nor will the man who trusts in God ever expect gratitude and praise for his good deeds. Rather will he confess his own gratitude to God who gave him all these opportunities for benevolence.

If his wealth depart from him, he will not worry, nor mourn over his loss, but will be just as thankful to God who took back the pledge, as he was grateful to Him when he gave it.

Bachya, "The Duties of the Heart," 11th Cent. (Introd.)

HE who is blind to God's beneficence, ever stumbles in the darkness of error. He is oblivious of God's generosity, and so arrives at cynical and hard conclusions. If he achieves wealth or power, he believes that he has achieved it unaided, and that therefore he may enjoy it alone. Being conscious of no gift from God, he rarely feels the im-

pulse of graciousness towards God's children. But a vision of God's bounty soon illumines the dark places of life. Let man but see how abundant is God's goodness, and his soul will be filled with the light of genial kindness. He will discover that the motive law of life is not selfish grasping, but generous blessing. The warming sun, the fruitful rain, the abundant earth and the magic seed, are God's messengers, carrying His gifts to the children of man. The very will of man, his persistence of purpose, the energy to toil, all come unearned from the Beneficent One. Man indeed labors—that is his destiny, but without God's gifts, he would not have the power to work, nor would his work bring blessing.

Let man think of God's endless goodness and be aware of the constant debt he bears his heavenly Father. Let the words of the Psalmist be in his heart: "How can I repay unto the Lord all His bountiful dealings towards me?" Let him vow to pay back to God's children the gifts which he has received. "My vow will I pay in the presence of all the people."

GRACIOUS Father, Source of all joy, Fountain of the living waters of strength, Thou showerest Thy blessings upon us without stint. Our powers, our achievements, our good fortune, our happiness, all come from Thee. O God, we pray Thee, add to Thy blessings unto us the consciousness of Thy goodness. As Thou givest us health and strength, give us too the vision to see Thy constant kindness. May we never cease to be

grateful unto Thee. May we see Thy hand in the moulding of our lives, and ever thank Thee.

Grant that our gratitude express itself in helpfulness. Teach us to walk in Thy footsteps; to be generous, helpful and good, so that our hearts may reflect Thine endless bounty. May we be Thy messengers of blessing, aiding the poor, helping the helpless, healing the sick at heart. So that men may know us for Thy children, and thank Thee for the blessings we bestow. Amen.

Succoth—The Feast of Tabernacles

With wondrous works dost Thou answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation;

Thou the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of the distant seas. Thou hast remembered the earth and watered her, greatly enriching her, with the river of God that is full of water.

Watering her ridges abundantly, settling down the furrows thereof, Thou makest her soft with showers, Thou blesseth the growth thereof.

Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness, and Thy paths drop fatness.

The pastures of the wilderness do drop; and the hills are girded with joy.

The valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, yea, they sing.

Psalm 65, 6, 10-14.

Thy praise, O Lord, will I proclaim
In hymns unto Thy glorious name.
O Thou Redeemer, Lord and King,
Redemption to Thy faithful bring!
Before Thine altar they rejoice
With branch of palm and myrtle stem.
To Thee they raise the prayerful voice—
Have mercy, save, and prosper them.

May'st Thou in mercy manifold,
Dear unto Thee, Thy people hold,
When at Thy gate, they bend the knee,
And worship and acknowledge Thee,
Do Thou their hearts' desire fulfill,

Rejoice with them in love this day,
Forgive their sins and thoughts of ill,
And their transgressions cast away.
They overflow with prayer and praise
To Him who knows the future days.
Have mercy Thou, and hear the prayer
Of those who palms and myrtle bear.
The day and night they sanctify
And in perpetual song adore,
Like to the heavenly host they cry;
'Blessed art Thou for evermore.'

Festival Prayerbook, transl. by Alice Lucas. *

THE victory of the harvest should be hallowed by the humility of gratitude. We have toiled and conquered the earth. The fields now pay us their tribute. Yet lest we grow boastful of our skill and vainglorious of our power, let us come before the Lord at this time of our triumph, uttering thanksgiving with the voice of joy. For if we but reflect, we will perceive, that vain is our strength unaided. God gives power to our hands. He sends the rain to bless the earth, and the light of the sun to call forth the seeds into flourishing life.

Thus on this feast the sons of Israel come before the Bestower of blessings, carrying the symbols of harvest into the house of prayer. They enter into the frail booths, that they may never forget that unless the Lord build the house, all the cherished plans of life are uncertain and frail, unable to withstand the gales of misfortune.

* *Reprinted by permission of The MacMillan Co., from "The Jewish Year" by Alice Lucas.*

Though separated from the soil for centuries, Israel still assembles on this harvest feast to utter his songs of gratitude, and to call upon the peoples of the earth to join in praises: 'Shout for joy unto the Lord, all ye lands.'

SUPREME and bountiful Father! The bounties and beauties of the visible world bring health to the body and cheer to the mind, sustaining and prolonging our life on earth, enabling us to work and to experience and to learn the lessons of earth. But, O Thou Eternal One, our Refuge, the visible world brings us also tidings of Thee! The countless boons and charms of earth whisper of a life that is vaster than earth! The languishing glories of the harvest tide bring to the heart mystic intimations: "There in an Unchanging One behind all change." We sit in the Succah of physical existence narrowly confined, eating and drinking in its shade; yet, through the leafy roof, steal the sunlight and starlight gleams of Thy spirit and we glimpse the boundless outdoor reaches of the soul.

The harvest joys, and all of life's joys, with which Thou blessest us, are but resting places on the arduous way, booths of recuperation in the toilsome wilderness, for not through pleasure, satisfaction and ease, but through struggle, effort and pain, do we approach the promised land. O Eternal, far other than the joy of bodily contentment is the joy for which our spirits yearn. We crave the gladness which Thou puttest into the heart "more than when their corn and their wine increase." The joys of sense are imperfect joys.

The inward joy of the soul is the perfected joy, with him of old, we pray,

> "Though the fig tree shall not blossom
> Neither fruit be in the vines:
> Though the labor of the olive fail,
> And the fields yield no food;
> Though the flock be cut off from the fold
> And there be no herd in the stalls,
> Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
> I will exult in the God of my salvation."

Lord, we know that we must come before Thee carrying in our hands the citron and the palm of fair thoughts and noble deeds. Not words nor rites alone are harvest yielding seed. Thoughts and deeds are the planting that ripeneth into righteousness and light. Grant, then, that we may unceasingly thus plant, reaping, beneath Thy benediction at length, every mellow fruition of character, yea, the precious heavenly garnering of the soul. Amen.

From Strength to Strength

Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel: 'My way is hid from the Lord, and my right is passed over from my God'? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, nor is weary? His discernment is past searching out. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint. *Isaiah 40, 27-31.*

Said R. Nehorai: If necessary, I would neglect all other earthly labors, and teach my son only the law of God, for a man benefits from it in this world, and it endures as an aid to him through eternity. Other labors are not so; for when man falls into sickness or old age or sorrow, and he is no longer able to pursue his daily tasks, he will suffer hunger. But not so if he knoweth God's law, for it will preserve him from evil in his youth, and give him unfailing help in his old age. For it is said: 'Those that wait for the Lord shall increase in strength.' *(Isaiah 40, 31*
'They shall still flourish in old age.' *(Psalm 92, 15)*
Mishna, (Kiddushin, IV, 14)

WE do not know our own strength. We make use of physical means to develop our muscular powers. Our spiritual power, too, needs strengthening, for in the crises of life, physical vigor will serve us as poorly as it did Samson. As we nurture our bodies, so we must fortify our souls.

With every effort of self-control, with every exercise of self denial, with every struggle against temptation, we gather moral power. We go from strength to strength as we grow in self-mastery.

Let us go from strength to strength direct to God. Strength grows from what it feeds upon. In fulfilling the will of the Omnipotent One we borrow strength from Him. God is thus the greatest and surest source of spiritual energy. Faith in Him enables us to face every trial with calm assurance, and to surmount every difficulty. We can seek for strength in the study of the Divine Word. The Bible is a veritable power-house of religious strength. One cannot read a Psalm thoughtfully without receiving an increase of spiritual force. The prayerbook is an inexhaustible spring of hope, courage and energy. The power to do things, to bear burdens often comes to us in unexpected moments. We have drawn upon a hidden source; God is helping us, though we are unaware of His help. Let us consciously claim the great power of God's Love, ever calling upon us to exert ourselves bravely in His cause.

OMNIPOTENT God, all nature lives by Thy royal word. Thou alone art Master of all things. Naught can arise against Thee and resist Thy will. Neither the devices of cunning nor the efforts of might can avail against Thee.

If in reliance upon our powers we strive against Thy law, then are our councils confused and our strength is as naught. We have seen an end to every earthly excellence, but Thy commandments

stand firm. If Thy laws are our delight, if we seek to fulfil Thy purposes, then cometh strength from Thee, and we labor and are not weary; we toil and are not faint.

Heavenly Father, teach us Thy will. Accustom us to seek out Thy purposes and to train our human will to harmonize with Thine eternal plan. Teach us to labor with Thee in Thy works of creation, so that the work of our hands be established by Thy support, and the meditations of our heart purified by thoughts of Thee. Grant that in performing deeds of mercy we grow in lovingkindness, and in aiding the weak according to Thy behest, we go from strength to strength. Amen.

Light Divine

Many say: 'Oh that we could see some good.' Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me.

For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light do we see light.

Psalm 4; 27, 1; Isaiah 9, 1; Psalm 43, 3; 36, 10.

Rabbi Alexandrai uttered this prayer: May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to set us in a place of light and not of darkness; suffer not our hearts to languish, nor gloom to enshroud our eyes. *Talmud, (Ber. 17a)*

Saith the Holy One, praised be He; Let My light be in thy hand, and thy light shall be in Mine.' The light of the Lord is His divine law, for it saith: 'The commandment is a lamp and the teaching is a light.' (Proverbs 6, 23). When a man performeth a righteous deed, it is as if he kindles a light before the Lord. Through his righteousness man giveth life unto his soul. For just as one candle can kindle a thousand lights and its own light remain undiminished, so will God preserve from harm those who perform His commandments.

Midrash, (Exodus R. 36, 3 Adapted)

LIGHT is symbolic of knowledge; it is also symbolic of joy. Our wisdom and our happiness are the light of our life. But contrasted with the fitful

light of worldly knowledge, and the feeble glow of the joy founded on creature comforts and gratifications, there shines, in steady light, the knowledge which grows from righteousness and the radiant joy of God's nearness—the light divine. Earthly knowledge is an uncertain guide. It soon discovers its own limitations and recoils in disappointment and despair from mysteries it cannot penetrate. In such 'wisdom is much vexation.' Material joys are precarious. The mind that is fed upon them alone, must inevitably undergo distraction and despair when earthly pleasures are impaired or withdrawn. Earthly knowledge and earthly joys, are but partial blessings. They lessen our darkness, but are too feeble to light our way into eternity.

We seek the light divine to find a knowledge that cannot fail. When God enters our hearts, mysteries cease. Nature gains a Master and history a goal. The past brings a lesson, and the future a hope. God sends forth His light and His truth to lead us.

We seek the light divine, to find joy that cannot fade. When the Lord is our strength and our song, earthly joys grow calm, and even adversity loses its bitterness. Prosperity brings the satisfactions of duty, and poverty the consolations of fortitude.

We may not reject earthly wisdom or material joy. We must acquire their light and ennoble it. We must go from the knowledge of earthly things to the knowledge of their Creator, and from earthly happiness to joy in the Lord. If we seek His presence continually, the night will pass, and in

the dawn, the Lord will be our light and our salvation.

IN Thy light, O Lord, do we seek light. When we stray from Thee we grope in darkness. Therefore, O Light Divine, do Thou shine into our hearts. Send forth Thy light to lead us. Teach us how to rest in Thee. Teach us how to rejoice in Thee. Enlighten our spirit that we may see that Thou and Thou only canst be our unalloyed good. Deliver us from the illusion that aught except Thee can give us true contentment. Grant that all our joys be hallowed by the sense of Thy presence; so that our knowledge lead us to the knowledge of Thee. Amen.

Reliance

Say among the nations: 'The Lord reigneth.' The world also is established; it cannot be moved.

For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven.

Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth and it standeth.

They stand this day according to Thine ordinances; for all things are Thy servants.

Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction. I have seen an end to every purpose; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Psalm 96, 10; 119, 89-96.

The fruits of reliance are: The repose of the heart, being freed from worldly worry; peace from agitation of the soul; and freedom from grief at the non-fulfillment of material desires. Thus can man live on earth in serenity, confidence and peace.

Bachya, "The Duties of the Heart," 11th Cent. (Introd. to "Gate of Trust.")

Let this verse never depart from thy lips. "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our high tower"; nor this verse: "The Lord of Hosts, happy is the man who trusteth in Him." *Palestinian Talmud, (Berakot V, I.)*

HOW easily do we become panic stricken! When some of the joys we seek elude us, when some plans in which we had trusted end in failure, when friends upon whom we have relied prove untrustworthy, then suddenly a sense of insecurity overpowers us. The whole world seems to grow uncertain. Nothing tangible, nothing secure remains. We begin to see that wealth, no matter

how strongly entrenched and seemingly impregnable, is suddenly swept away. Strong nations whose might seemed endless, weaken and fall. Nothing seems firm, nothing eternal. The rock upon which we builded our house of life proves to be treacherous sand. We lean upon our house, it does not stand.

Trust in the Lord at all times. The Lord is the the Rock of Ages. When the mountains move into the heart of the seas, He alone endures. Nations come into being. They plan and scheme to conquer the earth. The Lord bringeth to naught the councils of rulers. Nations return into the darkness under His rebuke, but the words of His mouth are for all generations. His purposes endure.

When under the stress of successive disappointments, human friendships seem to grow insecure, when life seems joyless and loveless, when to our harrassed spirits it may seem that even father and mother have forsaken us, then this truth still remains: We can put our trust in His comfort and help. His mercy and His love endure for ever.

ETERNAL One, who changest not though all else vanish, from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art the same. We it is who vacillate and change. Like careless children we often forget Thee, and go astray after vain things that are of no avail. We put our reliance in the power of our arms, they weaken. We trust in our wealth, it disappears. We build upon might and power, they vanish. Then we sit upon the barren ground,

amid the ruins of our world, desolate and forsaken.

O Eternal Father, we have gone astray. We have wandered away from the Fountain of Living Waters, into the desert of illusions. Bring us back to Thee. Teach us to trust in Thee alone, to rely upon Thy purposes, and to seek Thy love. Fortify us against the disappointments of the world. Put into our hearts the unshakable confidence, that though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, Thy love and help will never depart from us, and never wilt Thou annul Thy covenant of peace. Amen.

Hanukkah—The Feast of Light

It was on the fifteenth day of the month of Kislev, that the messengers of King Antiochus set up an idol on the altar of God, and had incense burnt in its honor. And they gave orders that the people of Judea should forsake the Law and the covenant, profane the sabbath and pollute the sanctuary. And many chose rather to die than to forsake the holy covenant. And the king's officers came to the city of Modin, and said to Mattathias the son of John, the son of Simon the Hasmonean: Thou art a great man, and strengthened with sons and brethren in this city. Come, then, and fulfill the king's command as all the heathens have done, and the men of Judah and they that remained in Jerusalem. But Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice: Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him and fall away each one from the religion of his fathers, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers.

Then Judah called Maccabee, rose up, and all his brethren aided him, and they fought with gladness the battle of Israel. Judah led them into battle and the hosts of the enemy were discomfited before him. And Israel had a great deliverance.

On the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, the sanctuary of God was dedicated anew with songs and music, and the people praised the God of heaven who had given them great victory, and they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days.

I Maccabees (Version in Union Prayerbook p. 49)

Rock of Ages, let our song praise Thy saving power;
Thou, amidst the raging foes, wast our shelt'ring tower.

Furious they assailed us, but Thine arm availed us.
And Thy word broke their sword when our own strength failed us.

Kindling new the holy lamps, priests approved in suffering,
Purified the nation's shrine, brought to God their offering.
And his courts surrounding, hear, in joy abounding,
Happy throngs, singing songs, far and wide resounding.

Children of the martyr race, whether free or fettered,
Wake the echoes of the songs where ye may be scattered.
Yours the message cheering, that the time is nearing
Which shall see, all men free, tyrants disappearing.

THE military victory of the Maccabees was not as important as the cause for which they fought. In such a cause even defeat would have been glorious. In traditional Jewish literature, the battles of the Hasmoneans were disregarded, and only the story of the miraculous light, which burnt through all the days of Hanukkah, was preserved. To the people of Israel, groping through the gloom of the Dark Ages, Hanukkah brought glad tidings of an inevitable dawn. What of the night? Though night envelop us, there cometh also the morning. The feast commemorated, not man's victory, but God's. It told of the vindication of justice by the God of justice. To the people few in number and bowed with grief, it reasserted the assurance of the Psalmist that God delighteth not in men of might, but in those who hope for His mercy.

To us the feast still brings a living word, for we too live in darkness. We still see wrong triumph

over right, cruelty over mercy, and hatred subdue the light in the souls of men. We have lived through the shock of battle, and have seen the victor suffer with the vanquished.

Surely not by might can man prevail, but by the light of the Divine Spirit. Violence breeds violence, but peace grows from faith. Prejudice and hatred will not endure. Truth cannot be defeated for ever. No just hope ever died. If righteousness will not despair, if sorrow will but be patient, if truth will but be strong, the night will pass. The Eternal God will send forth the light of His countenance, and grant His children peace.

LORD of Hosts, who is like unto Thee among the mighty? Thou alone art our strength and our song, an everpresent help in time of trouble. Though evil encamp against us, though hatred seek our downfall, we will recall Thy victories of old, and trust in Thy power.

On this day, glorified by ancient triumphs, we confess our weakness before Thee. We had believed in Thy word, but disappointments have shaken our faith. We sought Thy light, but despair has darkened our way. O be Thou our light and our salvation. Strengthen our hearts, for they are disquieted. Uplift our souls, for they are cast down. Some have forgotten Thy word. Some are tempted to forsake Thy worship. O grant that we and our household, stand firm in battle. Teach us to rebuild the walls that are shattered. Teach us to cleanse the altars of our hearts, and to rededicate them this day to Thee, to Thy service alone. Amen.

Envy

Envy thou not the man of violence and choose none of his ways.

My steps had well nigh slipped; for I was envious at the arrogant.

A tranquil heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones.

For anger killeth the foolish man and envy slayeth the silly one.

But as for me, I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause,

Who doeth great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number.

Proverbs 3, 31; Psalm 73, 2, 3; Proverbs 14, 30; Job 5, 2, 8, 9.

An envious eye, an evil mind and hatred of fellow-creatures lead man to destruction.

Ethics of the Fathers, (Chap. 2, 16)

In the life to be, there is neither envy nor hatred, nor contention, but the righteous sit with crowns on their heads, rejoicing in the light of God's countenance.

Talmud, (Ber. 17a)

JEALOUSY is a disease of the spirit. It is the symptom that something is wrong with the soul. Envy is sin together with its punishment. It is an iniquity which brings its own requital of misery. Like any other sickness, envy can be cured only by the removal of its causes. Excessive estimation of one's self is the distortion from which envy arises. It is bred from a wrong attitude of the mind. The mind looks toward self when it ought to look toward God.

Envy is always concerned with matters of inferior worth. One never envies in another, fine character, noble disposition, or unreserved consecration. The invariable objects of envy are wealth and fame, praise and comeliness, influence and position—in a word, material and perishable advantages. If the command to love God with heart and soul and might were literally obeyed, there would be no envy, for the destructive fire cannot rage without the fuel of low desires. The cure for envy is to desire God. When we long for Him with all our souls, we cease to long inordinately for those ephemeral advantages in which all envy centers.

As the body needs the vast pure air, so does the soul need the eternal. Without them, body and soul sicken and deteriorate. Envy is suffocation of the soul. To prevent and cure this spiritual ill the soul must seek to breathe the untainted air of Infinity and live in the pure holiness of God's Presence.

ETERNAL One, Thou are our life, Thou art our health. Our souls grow sick when removed from Thee. When separated from Thee, we fade and wither like the leaf separated from the stem. O let our love for Thee become perfected. So unstintedly may our hearts be given unto Thee, that our minds and our hands may be given unreservedly to the duties that come from Thee. Be our souls so full of love that there will be no room for fretful jealousy, and our minds and hands so occupied with our work that there will be no time for envy.

Sweeten our lives with Thy presence, and calm us with Thy holiness Purify us with Thy grace. Let Thy beauty be upon us. For Thou art the purpose of our existence, Thou art our life's end and aim.

Tolerance

Love ye therefore the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes. And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel and spread out his hands towards heaven and he said—Moreover concerning the stranger that is not of thy people Israel, when he shall come out of a far country for Thy name's sake—for they shall hear of Thy great name and of Thy mighty hand, and of Thine outstretched arm—when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for; that all people of the earth may know Thy name to fear Thee, as doth Thy people Israel, and that they may know that Thy name is called upon this house which I have built.

Deut. 10, 19; I Kings 8, 41ff.

'Thy priests are clad in righteousness.' This verse of the Psalms refers to righteous men of all nations. They are priests to the Holy One, blessed be He.

Midrash, (Seder Elijah Zuta, XX ed. Warsaw)

I call heaven and earth to witness that whether it be Gentile or Israelite, man or woman, slave or handmaid, the Divine Spirit rests upon all of them according to their deeds.

Midrash, (Seder Elijah Rabba ed. Friedmann p. 48)

The Gentiles, by wisdom and knowledge and understanding, may well attain to the very essence of the Torah, and love God with perfect love, whether He sends them happiness or sorrow. *Midrash, (Levit. R. 3, 7.)*

Judaism looks upon all human beings as children of one Father; thinks of them all as created in the image of God,

and insists that a man is to be judged not by his religion, but by his action.

S. D. Luzzato, (*Foundation of the Torah, p. 44.*)

THOU shalt love the stranger, is one of the noblest insistences of true religion. Man's untutored tendency is to love himself, and to consider his own conduct the proper rule of life. He is prone to feel contempt for strangers, and to despise strange ideas. All people tend to group the rest of humanity under the term 'barbarians.' Thus humanity chronically breaks up into sharp divisions, nation against nation, race against race, man against man.

The faith of Israel began very early to combat the natural intolerance of men. The lesson of mutual tolerance was natural to it, for the religion of Israel grew up under stress. The sons of Jacob had been slaves under hard taskmasters. They had felt the bitter pain that is often the lot of the stranger. Thus they understood readily the behest of their leader: Love ye therefore the stranger, for strangers were ye in the land of Egypt.

Judaism developed the concept of God the Creator, the Universal Father to whom all men are children. Thence grew the conviction that the Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works. The royal builder of God's first sanctuary on Mt. Zion, dedicated the Temple with the prayer that God hearken to the supplication of the stranger who may come to seek His presence.

When, therefore, we consider ourselves the people chosen for God's service, we must accept our task in humility. It must not be a cause for haughty superiority. While we consider our faith to be true, we must not consider other faiths false. We must respect the soul of the stranger, although his faith seem foreign to us, although his prayers seem improper. No bitterness should ever make us forget that, though men be strangers to each other, they are children to God.

O EXALTED Power who inhabitest eternity, what can we say in Thy presence? Our might is as naught before Thee; our pretensions are empty; our human superiorities vain. When we forget Thee, we boast of our strength. We dream illusory dreams of greatness. We are childishly proud of ourselves, and scornful of our fellow men. But in Thy presence our vauntings cease. At Thy throne, all men stand in humble equality.

We thank Thee this day for the visions of ancient days; that Thou didst teach Thy seers to dream of all Thy children standing humbly in reverence before Thee, joined in mutual friendship. We thank Thee for all the ancient behests to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to love the stranger.

Heavenly King, Thou hast lovingkindness abundant for all Thy children. Grant us, we pray Thee, a measure of Thy goodness, and of Thy tolerance, so that no hatred may ever blind us to each other's godliness. May all of us be ever conscious of standing together in Thy great Presence. O Source of all strength, grant us the power to

endure adversity in patience, to meet harshness with gentleness, and to answer prejudice with serene tolerance, so that men may recognize that Thy Presence dwells in our midst, and through our humanity, learn of Thy divine mercy. Amen.

Compensation

Say ye of the righteous that it shall be well with him;
For they shall eat of the fruit of their doings.
Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him; for the work of his hands shall be done to him.
For they sow the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind.
The mind stayed on Thee, Thou keepest in perfect peace, because it trusteth in Thee.
Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for the Lord is God, an everlasting Rock.

Isaiah 3, 10-11; Hosea 8, 7; Isaiah 26, 3-4.

The day is short, the work is great, the laborers are slothful, but the reward is great and the Master is urgent. It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it altogether. Trustworthy is your Employer to give you the reward of your labors.

Be as careful with what may seem to be a minor duty, as with a grave one, as you can never know the measure of reward allotted for duties performed.

Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; be rather like servants who serve their master without thinking of the reward.

Ethics of the Fathers, II, 20, 21; II, 1; 3.

THE law of compensation is based on God's justice. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?" "Far be it from Thee to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked." We cannot believe that God, who is just, will not distinguish in some way between those who have wilfully yielded to their

lower instincts, and those who have disciplined their souls to live in toil and in righteousness. While we cannot know the manner and the time of God's compensation, yet the prophet's words: 'Woe unto the wicked,' and 'It shall be well with the righteous,' must be true. God is surely aware of all our wilful rebelliousness, nor does He forget our faithful strivings to do His will.

Although the principle of compensation is fundamental to our faith, yet we can never calculate or predict the punishment or the reward of any man, for there are innumerable factors beyond our ken. How can we be sure that this man will receive punishment, when we can never estimate the abundance of God's mercy? How can we be confident that another will be granted great reward, when we can never know how much his merit is dependent upon others, for what hidden faults he has still to atone?

The mystery of reward and punishment remains hidden with God; but to us are revealed the duties of our life. He has given us many tasks, as difficult as they are exalted. We may never complete even one of them, but we cannot neglect them. Our reward is sure, although we cannot calculate it. Let us cease thinking of the wages of virtue, and devote ourselves to our work. Let us serve the Master without the constant dread of His punishment, and without endlessly estimating what reward we may receive for each act of righteousness. Let us trust in His mercy, and leave the reward to His beneficence. Let us never murmur at the prosperity of the apparently

wicked; we cannot know all of their merits. Let us not despair at our own suffering; God has reasons beyond our finding out. It is for us to serve our Father, to trust in His justice and to hope for His mercy.

ALL-KNOWING Father, Ever-true, Thine omniscience and Thy justice are one! No human deed or thought is ever hidden from Thy sight. The labor of each of Thy creatures receives its reward. We trust in Thee at all times. Judge Thou the worth of our toil.

Heavenly Father, purify our hearts. Inspire us to labor out of love for Thee, rather than for the gift of Thy blessings. Teach us to realize that while our reward will surely come, our duties are always before us. Urgent are the tasks Thou hast assigned us, O Master; to do justice, causing hatred and persecution to cease; to love mercy, teaching forgiveness and benevolence; to walk humbly with Thee, reverently aware of Thy holy Presence. Forgive us, we pray Thee, when we stray from Thee; and when we toil in Thy name, O establish Thou the works of our hands. Amen.

Purim—The Feast of Joy

And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews that were in the provinces of the King Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, to enjoin them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, the day wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month that was turned unto them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness and of sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor.

Wherefore I perceived that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion, for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him.

And thou shalt rejoice in all the good which the Lord thy God hath given thee, and unto thy house, thou and the Levite and the stranger that is in the midst of thee.

Esther 9, 20-22; Eccl. 3, 22; Deut. 26, 11.

The verse, "I commend mirth" (Eccl. 8, 15), refers to the joy which accompanies righteousness, while the verse, "Mirth, what doth it accomplish?" deprecates the joy which is not connected with righteous deeds. This teaches that the Divine Presence never comes near to a man when he yields to despair, or to indolence, or to idle hilarity and levity. God's presence comes with the joy of righteousness. *Talmud, (B. Sabb. 30b.)*

IF life were a tragedy, then joy would be self-deception. If there were no hope for man to remould the world to his soul's desire, then grief would be natural and despair justified. But Juda-

ism is a religion of duty and of hope. It sets a task for man, and promises achievement. Judaism does not deny the existence of evil, of tyranny, hatred and calamity; but it insists that tyranny will be crushed, hatred may be conquered through patience and love, and that those who sow with tears will reap with joy.

One of the great days of the religious year is Purim, a feast of happiness, a day which recalls how hatred and intrigue were baffled, and justice was vindicated. The day is to be observed with songs of rejoicing in God's abundant blessings and a rebirth of confidence in His unfailing help. Its purpose is to strengthen man that he may not fret because of evil-doers; that he may labor in patience and look forward to the joy of achievement. God's Presence does not come to him who plods on in idle despair, but to the toiler who labors in hope and in joy.

THOU, our Exceeding Joy, this feast of mirth admonishes us that righteousness must be the goal of our rejoicing even as it is the aim of our earnest moods. Grant us then, we beseech Thee, the merriment which worketh good, but keep us far from the merriment that worketh ill. May we turn from all that weakens body and mind, reject every excess and spurn such pleasures as, forgetting its due place, would usurp that primacy which duty alone may hold. Abundant be our laughter but may it be kindly, laughing with others where we can, laughing at others, never; not untimely laughter or the laughter of ridicule or disdain, but the laughter of concord and joyous comradeship.

Open Thou our eyes to the happiness lurking everywhere. May we not, seeking pleasures afar, miss the delights of the simple and common near at hand. May the unsought and unexpected joys abounding like wayside flowers along the path of our daily tasks find us ever receptive. Give growth to our capacity for joy. Even amid care and age, may it not forsake us utterly.

Above all, may we, of the House of Israel, derive light from the memories of this day, perceiving how, not only in Persia of old, but in every land and age, arrogance and pride beget misunderstanding and contention. How blessed the Purim mirth that can dispel Haman hatred, the kindly cheer that can bring fellowship and peace! May the wisdom and the faithfulness which were Mordecai's, and the devotion and modesty which were Esther's, and the deliverance which came to Israel in the olden story, enlarge into a world-wide deliverance, our partial sympathies growing into world-wide sympathies and Thy name, O God, become written upon every soul in letters of world-wide brotherhood and good will. Amen.

Prayer for Others

Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.

Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.

And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, 'Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee.'

And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said: 'Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people?'

Jeremiah 37, 3; I Sam. 12, 23; Numbers 12, 13; Exodus 32, 11.

Whoso is able to pray for another but neglects to do so is a sinner.

This people is like a vine. The men of means are the sprigs. The men of learning are the clusters. The untutored are the leaves. The delinquent ones are the sapless fibres. Let the clusters pray for the leaves for there can be no clusters unless there are leaves.

Talmud, (Berakot 12b; Hullin 92a)

OUR prayers should ever be the expression, not alone of our yearning for communion with God, but also of our deepest concern and love for our neighbors and friends, for the whole world of humankind. We ask, when we pray, for some blessing, for some great gift from the boundless store of God's bounty; but how soon would the blessing, when granted to us, begin to pall and end in joyless discontent, if any of our brothers living by our side are pining and vainly struggling for these same gifts with which we are happily blessed! Can we be truly happy when God's own children are in misery and want? Yea, can we

ignore the needs of our fellowmen and yet hope to receive an answer to our own petitions from Him whose love embraces all of His children?

It behooves us, therefore, to recall that we are not alone in this world, and that, when we breathe forth our petitions to God on high, we should reach out beyond ourselves and our own selfish interests. When our prayers are selfish, they lose their spiritual value and power. The very presence of the God of justice is denied us, if we prove unjust to the needs of others. The God of mercy hearkens only to the supplications of the merciful. We come nearest to God, when we pray for the good of others. The noblest, because truest kind of prayer is that which is offered in behalf of others. For such prayer marks our deepest realization that God is love. Such prayer reveals us to be one with those for whom we pray; and all spiritual union among the finite is a necessary condition as it is a clear intimation of our complete union with the Infinite.

HEAVENLY Father, Thou dost bid us love our neighbor as ourselves. We pray to Thee for many blessings, we seek our own prosperity and health and joy at Thy hands. O grant us the love to seek with equal zeal the good of our fellowmen. Deepen our insight into the hearts of those around us. May we discover all that is precious within them that we shall feel prompted to invoke upon them Thy blessing. Grant that we may look beneath and beyond all that is repelling and discern in others all that inspireth love. As Thou art one

and Thy name is one, do Thou unite Thy children. O bring us spiritually nearer to one another and thus eternally nearer to Thee. Amen.

Israel's Unity

Hearken unto Me, ye that follow righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; look unto the rock whence ye were hewn and to the hole of the pit whence you were digged.

Look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bore you;

For when he was but one, I called him, and I blessed him and made him many.

And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all. And they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

For I, the Lord, change not, and ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Isaiah 51, 1-2; Ezek. 37, 22; Psalm 133, 1; Mal. 3, 6.

When all Israel is united, it becomes one household, and is called "holy" as the prophet saith, 'Holy is Israel to the Lord.'

As God Himself is one, so Israel is one, as Scripture saith, Israel one people on earth (II Sam. 7, 23). Just as His holy Name though spread throughout all lands is one, so Israel, though scattered among the nations remains one people. He who, in his prayer, knows how to declare the unity of the Name of the Holy One, helps, through his worship, to maintain the unity of Israel.

Book of Splendor, (Zohar, II, 121b, 16b, 57a)

ISRAEL'S unity is not based upon geographical accident nor solely upon racial identity. Israel is one people, and its unity is a conscious achieve-

ment, a determined conquest of the forces of disintegration. For, externally, the history of Israel has always been the history of a broken people. From almost the dawn of its story when the people divided into two nations, all the centuries seem to have striven to destroy them. They dwelt in different lands, distant from each other. Mountain barriers and oceans, diversity of languages and of mode of living, tended to estrange them. Yet they willed to be one people, and that will conquered time and circumstance.

The people of Israel willed to live, because its life had a purpose. It staunchly insisted that God sent it forth as a people among the nations of the earth. The children of Israel were convinced that they would have been recreant to God's purpose if they permitted themselves to cease as a force in history. They never wholly forgot the divine appointment: Ye are My witnesses; and the guiding aim of their life became: I shall not die but live, and declare the works of God.

God's purpose, they knew, was not entrusted to individual men, or to a special priestly caste. The whole people of Israel was bidden to look back to its father Abraham, God's first messenger, and to become like him, the servant of the Most High. The divine Law which God gave through Moses and the seers, was to be the heritage of the congregation of Jacob. The whole people was declared to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' Unity in Israel is a religious ideal.

Hence each individual among us must foster within himself those qualities which make for unity; the search for the common Father, the

glow of sympathy in suffering, the sense of belonging together in spite of accidental differences. No dispute must ever weaken our love for one another. We must guard against the forces of dissension. We must proudly cherish the designations 'Israel whom I have chosen,' 'Israel My firstborn son.' We must resolve to live, not merely as individuals, earthbound, but as the people upon whom God's light has arisen, that nations might walk in its radiance.

HEAVENLY Guide of earthly destinies! Nations grow and decay at Thy word. Thou sendest men forth to the ends of the earth as Thy messengers. To Thee we give thanks for the great love with which Thou hast loved Thy people Israel. May it ever continue to stand before Thy throne.

We have sought to live, O Master, in order to fulfil the duty for which Thou hast created us: 'This people which I have formed for Myself, that they might tell of My praise.' Forgive our failures to do Thy will. Pardon us when we forget Thee, and bow before idols of wood and stone. Put into our hearts, we beseech Thee, the trust in Thy purposes, that we may ever be near Thee, and through Thee, near to each other. May we never be estranged from Thee and thus estranged from our brethren. Make us worthy of the continuance of Thy mighty promise: I the Lord change not, and ye, O sons of Jacob, will not be consumed. Amen.

Righteousness

Seek good and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you as ye say.

Hate the evil and love the good, and establish justice in the gate.

Break Thou the arm of the wicked; and as for the evil man, search out his wickedness, till none be found. The Lord is King for ever and ever; the nations are perished out of His land. Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble. Thou wilt direct their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to attend; to right the fatherless and the oppressed, that man who is of the earth may be terrible no more. *Amos 5, 14-15; Psalm 10, 15-18*

Right and justice are not simply matters for the state and the social order, but belong to God, who defends the cause of the helpless and the homeless, 'who executes the judgment of the fatherless and the widow,' who regardeth not persons, nor taketh bribes.' Iniquity is hateful to Him; it cannot be covered up by pious acts, nor be justified by good ends. 'Justice is God's.' Thus every violation of justice, whether from sordid self-seeking or from tender compassion, is a violation of God's cause; and every vindication of justice, every strengthening of the power of right in society is a triumph of God.

The recognition of God as the righteous Judge of the world—Zidduk ha Din—is to bring consolation and endurance to the afflicted, and to remove from their hearts the bitter sting of despair and doubt.

K. Kohler, (Jewish Theology, p. 120, 125)

WHEN we consider that countless generations passed before the star of righteousness rose, then we can understand why so few as yet steer

their lives and chart their courses by it. And yet righteousness is the inspiration of the vision and message of the prophets. They fearlessly identified the worship of God with the service of man; therein was revealed their marvelous courage. They insisted that God desires justice and not sacrifice, acts of mercy and not mere piety. Let not those whose hands are stained with blood come into His sanctuary. "Wash yourselves. Make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Thus spoke the prophet Isaiah.

The world is still far from pursuing such principles. The faces of the poor are still ground into the dust. Injustice stalks on the highway, and man can decree hunger and sorrow for his fellowman.

But let none who is not clean of hands and pure of heart call himself by the name of the Most High God. He who would serve God must not only be guiltless of injustice; he must never regard wrong with complacency. His soul must flame with wrath at the tyrant. From his lips must burst the word of the Almighty God. His sword must leap from its scabbard to strike to earth the chains that bind men.

As children of Israel, the race from whose loins sprang the prophets, let us cherish the heritage of their spirit, and let us live by it.

UNTO Thee do I turn, O God of Love, who dwellest with the humble and lowly. Thou desirest that man "walk uprightly, work righte-

ousness and speak the truth in his own heart." Justice, and justice alone hast Thou asked him to pursue.

Grant me, I pray Thee, O Lord my God, a heart wide as the needs of men. I would not merely obey the law for the good of myself alone! Sympathy, only divine sympathy can teach me to stretch out a hand to the fallen, to heal the wounds inflicted by the cruelties of men. Teach my spirit to scorn whatever savors of tyranny and oppression. May I never grow cold and listless, or my ears grow dulled to the cry of distress. Grant that I may realize that I can serve Thee only by loving my fellowman as myself. Let me be rather of the humble than of the proud, of those who suffer than of those who crush; so that I may walk in Thy path and be at one with Thee, who lovest justice and establishest the world in righteousness. **Amen.**

Hospitality

The stranger did not lodge in the street; my doors I opened to the roadside.

And lo! three men stood over against him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed down to the earth and said: My lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let now a little water be fetched—and recline yourselves under the tree; after that ye shall pass on.'

Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou has anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Job 31, 32; Genesis 18, 2-5; Psalm 15, 1-2; 23, 5.

Let the poor be members of thy household.

Ethics of the Fathers, (I, 5)

A man's house should be open wide to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west—so that the poor should not be put to trouble in finding entrance.

Ethics of the Fathers of Rabbi Nathan, VII.

If three have eaten at a table and conversed on sacred themes, they have, as it were, eaten at the table of the Most High.

Ethics of the Fathers, III, 4

HOSPITALITY is most blessed when brotherliness attends it. Our social divisions into classes did not exist in bygone centuries of Jewish life; the poorest sojourners were guests at the tables of the wealthy. Hospitality is at its fairest

when the heart corresponds with the outward act. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." Hospitality is at its noblest when it is the occasion not of mere indulgence but of lofty converse. Our sages have said: "If three have eaten at a table and conversed on sacred themes they have, as it were, eaten at the table of the Most High."

Thoughts as well as persons can be objects of hospitality. As the individual whose home is open is more gracious than he whose doors are shut, so is the mind which is open to light from all directions more gracious than the mind that is barred and inaccessible. We must love the stranger for we were strangers in the land of Egypt. We must receive our fellowmen in kindliness for God is hospitable to us. The Psalmist said: "Thou preparest a table before me. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. I shall dwell in the house of the Lord." All of these treasured phrases are from the language of hospitality. For God is the host whose hospitality is at hand for our yearning hearts and souls.

O HEAVENLY Father, the heavens are Thy throne, the earth Thy footstool, all the world Thy house. We are but strangers and sojourners before Thee. O receive us into Thy presence. Grant that by our daily acts of kindness we come to realize Thy boundless beneficence. May we perceive in every hospitality we confer or receive the image of that supreme hospitality whereby we feast at the table of life everlasting. May ours be a hospitality engaging the heart no less than

the sense, not merely indulging the appetites but bringing light to the soul and transcending the unbrotherly lines of class separation; conscious that, before Thee, there is no division of higher and lower but only a brotherhood of Thy children all alike bidden to share in Thy bounties unstinted. Amen.

Our Enemies

I rejoiced not at the destruction of him that hated me, or exulted when evil found him.

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.

Let not kindness and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thy heart; so shalt thou find grace and good favor in the sight of God and man.
Job 31, 29; Proverbs 25, 21; Leviticus 19, 17; Proverbs 3, 3-4.

Who is strong? He who converteth a foe into a friend.
Ethics of the Fathers of Rabbi Nathan, (23, 1)

Alas for him who saith: 'I have been humiliated, be my fellowman humiliated. I have been cursed, be he also cursed.' Let him remember when he humiliates and curses a human being, it is God's image that he humiliates and curses.
Midrash, (Genesis R. 24, 7)

OUR worst enemy is our self. Others may hate us but our own misleading phantasies and our ungoverned impulses are foes beside which all other foes are negligible. These baneful qualities within us are the cause of most of the hostilities that we suffer from others. We assume insults where insults were never intended and slights where slights were not dreamed of. Subsequent reconciliation and explanation reveal how unnecessary the suffering has been which we caused ourselves and others.

When a person is our enemy and dislikes or hates us, how shall we overcome his hatred? By

retaliation? By inflicting reciprocal pain or injury? Surely not, but by substituting, so far as lies in our power, acts and attitudes that will help and gladden. No other antidote to hatred is conceivable. No other means of counteracting enmity are rational. To meet enmity with enmity is like fasting to overcome hunger, sprinkling oil to quench fire or pouring water to allay dampness. This is true of our national and racial hostilities as well as of our personal ones. When the misguided self of another cherishes hatred and our misguided self magnifies it, then naught can bring peace put patience and forgiveness. We must meet our fellowman with the abundant loving-kindness which we ask of God.

FATHER, Everlasting, who understandest the hearts of men, none is wholly righteous in Thy sight, yet Thou graciously pardonest Thy children, even when they rebel against Thee. Teach me, I pray Thee, to purify myself before I rebuke others. Open Thou my eyes that I may be enlightened. Keep me from seeking foes where there are no foes, and give me the insight to seek within and rout my foes where foes really lurk. Take from my soul the indolence and vanity, the selfishness and thoughtlessness that brings me into ill favor with my fellowmen. Imbue me with that righteousness without which there can be no peace, that love without which there can be no harmony, that brotherhood without which there can be no concord. Not that I might love my enemies do I pray, but that I might through goodness transform them; nay, that I might regard none as my

enemy. May there be granted me the wisdom to earn, through rectitude of my conduct, the love, regard and good favor of all whom my life may touch. Amen.

Pesach–The Feast of Freedom

Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy borders. And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying: It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.

Love ye, therefore, the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. *Exodus 13, 6-8; Deut. 10, 19.*

In each generation every man must regard himself as if he had come out of the land of Egypt. For it is said: And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying: It is the because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt. Not our fathers alone did the Holy One redeem, but us, too, did He redeem with them. For it is said: And He brought us out from thence. *(Deut. 6, 23)*

Mishna (Pesachim X. 5 and the Haggadah)

THE deliverance from Egypt is more than history. It is a constant admonition. Its story is recalled at every significant occasion of the year. To the lesson of each festival is added the words: A memorial of the departure from Egypt. Passover, which especially commemorates that event, is meant to be more than merely a reminiscence. It is to embody a living truth. Its ceremonies are calculated to bring glories of yesterday into the perplexities of today.

The fathers' bondage recalls to their sons their own thralldom. It brings the stirring word, that no man can worship God in spiritual slavery. The voice of God speaks only to the living spirit of free

men. No man can serve Him who is willing to remain a slave to his own desires. No man can call upon the Lord of Justice if towards God's children he is unjust and harsh. No man can adore the Father of Mercies if he is thrall to the bonds of hate.

In each generation man must break from the slavery of Egypt. He must learn from the endlessness of God's love to him, how to love the stranger, how to help the weak, and how to be merciful to the broken hearted. He must depart in haste from the serfdom of uninspired toil, and wander through the desert of self-discipline. He must long to enter the land which flows with the milk of kindness, that he may dedicate himself in freedom to the service of the living God.

EVERLASTING One, our Redeemer, the blessing brought by this day is substance of our fondest dreams, the essence of our dearest hopes. Lord, how precious unto us is Thy promise; "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments; and I will take you to Me for a people and I will be your God!"

Behold, we are still in fetters, our hearts are Egypt. Our minds are Pharaoh. Our passions are the tormentor's lash; our indolence, the slave herder's shackles. O redeem us from this slavery! Though the Pharaoh hordes of temptation pursue us, though we pass through the Red Sea of affliction, though our path be through the howling wilderness of hardship, O our Father, make us free.

Help us to efface our will before Thy will; for we have no freedom but in Thee. Let a growing submission of all wills to Thy will assuage those conflicts between will and will whence all enslavement cometh. Grant Thy children freedom from one another by granting them harmony with one another in a common harmony with Thee.

Yea, help us to efface our will before Thy will; that the will of each, as our sage hath taught, may become effaced before his fellow's will. Keep us from seeking freedom by the vain paths of strife. Lead us into those ways of forbearance, brotherhood and peace which alone are freedom's ways. "The Lord will fight for you, if ye abide in silence." O may those deathless words sound for ever in our souls!

Remove Thou the leaven of evil tendencies from our hearts. May we see in every sorrow the scouring of our sin-touched lives in preparation for the spiritual Passover of deeper wisdom and nobler character. Give us, in the struggle with ourselves, the persistance of a Moses, undaunted though ten times foiled. Make Thou of our souls open doorways through which the Elijah of goodness may enter the world reuniting the hearts of all who are estranged. May those who eat the bread of affliction soon partake of the wine of comfort.

"My beloved is mine and I am his
The shepherd among the lilies,"

These words our fathers read this day from sacred writ. We also turn to Thee, our Shepherd, our Beloved. Be Thou ours, make us Thine unto all eternity. Amen.

Immortality

He will swallow up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.

And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

Return, O my soul, unto thy rest; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears and my feet from stumbling.

I shall walk before the Lord in the lands of the living.

For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light do we see light.

I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will enter into them, I will give thanks unto the Lord.

Isaiah 25, 8; Eccles. 12, 7; Psalm 116, 7-9; 36, 10; 118, 17-18.

Even when they have died, the righteous live.

Talmud, (b. Ber. 18a)

You will find that in this world when man rejoices, his joy is never perfect. If he rejoices when children are born unto him, he also is troubled by the thought that they may not endure. But in the world to come, God will destroy death for ever; and then joy will be unalloyed. 'Then will our mouth be filled with laughter and our tongue with song.' *Midrash, (Yalkut Emor No. 654)*

The righteous will not rest from labor, neither in this world nor in the world to come; for it is said: 'They will go on from strength to strength.'

Talmud (B. Berakot 64)

THE hope of immortality is the strength of our life. Without the promise of life beyond the grave, our life on earth invites despair. Whenever we yield to the fear that our earthly labor will some day cease for ever, we lose the courage to overcome circumstance, and lack the will to resist failure. If our toil is but for a day, we cannot build. But if, as our sages assure us, we may labor on beyond the accident of death into eternity, then no failure is irreparable, no task is too great. When we may include infinity in our plans then no aim is unattainable, no vision is too exalted.

We tend to doubt our immortality whenever life defeats us. When our plans go awry and our efforts fail, when friends disappoint and solitude grows bitter, then our strength seems to vanish, a sense of our frailty overpowers us and there comes the dread that all our hopes will soon be quenched in an eternal darkness. Our disappointments and our discouragements engender the fear that our life will end in a final defeat and the grave will win its ultimate victory. The terror of death grows from our failures in life.

Yet when each morning dawns and our strength is renewed, when our efforts succeed and the spirit of God, calling to our souls, reveals our innate divinity, then our life again seems triumphant and indestructible. Hope revives and we see our spirit entering, beyond the grave, into the gateway of greater life. Death loses its sting and the grave its victory. When life is strong we foresee our immortality.

We are poised between despair and hope. Each day our failures bring the terror of the grave and our victories bring intimations of immortality. We have ever before us both life and death. It is for us to choose the hope of life eternal; to depart from fear and to be strong in faith; to assert to our failing hearts that we shall not die, but live, and declare for ever the wonders of God.

Our hopes are not delusions, for God is just and merciful. He would not bid us toil in His name, and then deny us the joy of completing our work. He would not bid us prepare in this antechamber of eternity, and then close against us the doors of His eternals halls. Since His mercies endure for ever, He would not bid us sow in tears, without permitting us to reap in joy. We may trust in His love. We have known bereavement and the pain of death. He will comfort us. He will destroy death for ever and wipe the tears from every face. Though the cords of death encompass us, we will yet walk before Him in 'the land of the living.'

ETERNAL Father, who ordainest life, our dwelling place in all generations, Thou placest a bound upon our earthly existence, and callest us forth from the storms of life unto Thy tent of peace. Thou hast destroyed death for ever by breathing into us a living spirit. Though our dust return to the earth, the spirit which Thou gavest, returns unto Thee.

We thank Thee, O Father, for Thy law of life. We thank Thee for each new morning when our awakening from sleep brings us a vision of im-

mortality; for each springtime which teaches us that death is but a brief rest presaging a newer life. We thank Thee for the spirit which brings us nearer to Thee, and bids us seek to live in the light of Thy countenance.

O Source of all power, grant us strength to trust in Thee. We need Thy help; for our failures discourage us and we fear the terrors of the grave. Beloved ones depart from us and we are bowed down in grief. O send Thine assurance that Thou wilt deliver our feet from stumbling, our eyes from tears, and our souls from death. Grant us the undying hope that, though Thou dost chasten us, Thou wilt not abandon our souls unto the grave, but Thou wilt open unto us the gates of righteousness that we may live in the radiance of Thy presence for ever. Amen.

God Our Sustainer

I lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence shall my help come? My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not slumber; behold He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul.

The Lord shall guard thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and for ever. *Psalm 121.*

'God's Angel' referred to in the Psalm means His Divine Presence which goeth with man and doth not depart from him as long as man obeys God's law. Therefore let man beware against going forth upon his journeyings alone. That is to say let him obey the Divine Will so that he shall not go forth without the accompanying Presence of God—which will sustain him and deliver him in every hour of need.

The Book of Splendor, (Zohar) 13th Cent. (I, 459.)

WE cherish the hope of growing worthy of our innate godliness, and we know that the serious labor of noble living requires a spirit of sustained courage which no defeat can crush, and a high hopefulness which no success can corrupt. Such a sustained spirit is, alas, rare among us, for we are creatures of mood. Now we are elated at some trivial success, and now some chance event casts its shadows upon our hearts.

We forget to seek the Lord and His strength,

for, in moments of minor achievement, we grow proudly self-sufficient. Our hand has wrought, our powers have achieved, our strength has accomplished. We need no help! Yet our self-reliance does not endure for, although it beseems us to stand proudly courageous as the children of the living God, the slightest failure drives us into dejection. Our hand seems weak; our powers puny, and our strength turned to water. An unbearable sense of our ineffectiveness crushes us to earth.

Thus driven by the stray winds of accident, from the proud harbor of exaltation to the rocks of despair, we turn from joy to sorrow, from sorrow to shortlived joy; we go from strength to weakness, and from weakness to illusions of strength. Left to our own resources, we endlessly waver, lacking the steadiness of aim, the firmness of purpose, which alone can make life nobly strong.

We need help from God. We need the consciousness of His unfailing presence, His immovable power, His everlasting help. Conscious of His sustaining strength, we remain moderate in our success knowing that He has aided us. We retain hope in time of failure, knowing that His hand can help. Never swerving from its course, guided by the star of its faith, our life pursues its steady progress.

THOU everlasting Help, be at my side. Thou hast ever been the help of our fathers. They trusted in Thee and were enheartened. When hatred beset them, when their life seemed a futile

struggle against implacable hostility, their consciousness of Thine everpresent aid saved them from despair.

O Eternal Power! Through all the changes of life, Thou dost not change. Teach me to look to Thee. Teach me to lean upon Thy strength. Let not pride corrupt me, nor weakness crush me. I lift up mine eyes to Thee. Thou wilt illumine my darkness. Sustain me; suffer not my foot to stumble. Make Thy Presence accompany me upon my way that I may walk firmly and confidently before Thee, towards the tasks which Thou hast set for me; leaning upon Thy help, fulfilling Thy purposes. Amen.

Suffering

For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

Thou didst turn for me my mourning into dancing; Thou didst loose my sackcloth, and gird me with gladness.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart.

Proverbs 3, 12; 6, 23; Psalm 30, 12; Ecclesiastes, 7, 2.

Said R. Elazar ben Jacob: "When sufferings come upon him, man must utter thanks to God, for suffering draws man near unto the Holy One, blessed be He. As it saith: "Whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, even as a father correcteth the son in whom he delighteth." When griefs come upon a man, let him stand up and receive them, for his reward will be beyond measure.

Midrash, (Tanhuma to Deut. 21, 10)

R. Zeira said: David said: "O Master of the world, teach me the path of life." Then answered the Holy One blessed be He: 'David! Is it life that Thou seekest. then meditate upon suffering, for "the reproofs of instruction are the ways of life." *Midrash, (Yalkut, Ps. 67)*

WHEN suffering comes upon us, as it comes to all, we often fret despairingly and repine. We cannot understand why we should be made the apparent sport of misfortune and calamity. We wonder why tender affection should be created, only to be rudely broken; why agonizing pain should wreck our nerves and consume our flesh;

circumstances. In moments of great sorrow, the stricken heart is apt to exclaim: "Surely God does not care, or else why does He inflict upon me such cruel pain!" The presence of evil—how baffling it is to our finite understanding! Yet it is through struggle and sorrow that we learn to know more of the love and faithfulness of God than in any other way! We know only too well that sorrow often breaks the crust of a superficial life, uncovers its deepest realities. Through the dark cloud that envelops us, there breaks forth a new vision of the aim and purpose of our earthly existence. Not always on the heights, sometimes from the depths do we best see God. And seeing Him, we come to realize that our life is not a haphazard occurrence of chance events and circumstances, that a Divine hand and purpose are discernible in all that befalls us. Out of the dark passages of life, we emerge into the light of faith, purified in spirit, more keenly alert and responsive to the soft whisperings of the still small voice ever striving to speak to our hearts.

How calmly the chastened and subdued soul of the erstwhile sufferer commits itself to Him who bears up the world and moulds our destinies! What a revelation comes from grief! What a boon and a blessing!

O LORD my God, I bow my head before Thee in humility and gratitude. When shadows enshroud me, when hardship and suffering invade the peacefulness of my life, I shall neither complain nor lose faith and courage, for Thou art with

me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Even though my path lie through gloom, I know that it will lead me to joy and peace. When the clouds gather and the storm breaks, my heart will not faint and my steps will not falter, for I trust in Thee and cannot fear. Help me, O God, to be firm and steadfast, to fix my gaze upon Thee and Thy wisdom. When weary, fretful, and discouraged, teach me, O Father, to be still, bravely to face life, and confidently to look across the vale of shadows. Strengthen me, O God, that I may be able to bear pain, sickness, or danger, with faith and fortitude, with dignity and hope. For even though Thou slayest me, yet will I trust Thee.

Holy Places

The Lord is in His holy temple;
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.

But as for me, in the abundance of Thy lovingkindness will I come into Thy house.

I will bow down toward Thy holy temple in the fear of Thee.

Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.

The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Habakuk 2, 20; Psalm 5, 8; Gen. 28, 16; Exodus 3, 5.

Whoso walketh in haughty pride repels the presence of God. *Talmud, (Beracot 43b)*

Whoever committeth sins in secret repels the presence of God. *Talmud, (Hag. 16a)*

God's presence abideth not amidst indolence, vexation, frivolity, levity, chatter or gossip but amidst holy joy. *Talmud, (Sabbath 30a)*

When a man prayeth he must demean himself as if the Divine Presence is before him. *Talmud, (Sanhedrin 22a)*

Whoso goeth from synagog to school house cometh face to face with God. *Talmud, (Beracot 64a)*

He who earnestly performeth righteousness earns the privilege of receiving the Divine Presence. *Talmud, (Men. 43b)*

ANY place which evokes ignoble motives loses whatever sacredness it may have possessed. If even a synagog become the scene of prejudice, cynicism or animosity, its holiness becomes profaned. But any place which strengthens the better part of our nature, is holy. A workshop wherein one labors with enthusiasm and zeal or an open field where one ardently and lovingly

raises sustenance from the earth or a market place in which ideals of brotherhood and good will are conceived and pursued can be holy places.

The sanctity of the places to which we come, depends, in no small measure, upon ourselves. No place can be holy to him who is unresponsive to noble appeals; while all the world is a sanctuary to the soul that is alive to all that is good, beautiful and true. The place where we have thrilled with love is a holy place. And therefore, under normal conditions, home is of all places the holiest. It is a sign of some abnormality when home ceases to be one of the sanctuaries of our life. Any place where we have discerned some new beauty is holy. The place where we have transcended some mighty sorrow; the place where we have performed some noble act of self-renunciation; the place where we have zealously worked; the place where we have earnestly prayed; or the place where we have abandond some injurious error and turned our face to the light, shines ever after with the beauty of holiness.

When, therefore, our synagogs, already blessed with sacred memories, are filled with the voice of earnest prayer and song, whenever the word of God uttered within it enters into loyal hearts, then the house of prayer becomes a true sanctuary, and the temple built by the hands of men, becomes God's dwelling place.

O THOU whom the seraphim declared thrice holy, the whole universe is full of Thy glory. Wherever Thou dost reveal Thyself is holy ground; at Sinai in the desert, in the Temple where

Thou didst call unto Samuel. Wherever Thy name was mentioned in reverence, Thou didst come and bless with Thy holiness. Whenever we seek to turn from Thee, the beauty of Thy holiness departs from us, and even places dedicated to Thy worship become profane.

We pray Thee, O Lord, keep us near to Thee, lest the glory of our life depart. Quicken the fountains of love and beauty within us, that the places whereon we stand may become unto us, in fuller measure, holy ground. Inspire us to be holy as Thou art holy, to walk in Thy footsteps, practicing lovingkindness and seeking peace and truth, until humble places become glorified by Thy presence, our habitations fit dwelling places for Thee, and all the world a Beth El, a House of God.

The Presence of God

Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in the nether world, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there would Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand would hold me. And if I say: 'Surely the darkness shall envelop me, and the light about me shall be night'; even the darkness is not too dark for Thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness is even as the light.

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. *Psalm 139, 7-12; Isaiah, 55, 6.*

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. The verse means that we should seek Him in the way that we can find Him. That is to say, to seek with all our heart for He is near to those who call upon Him in truth.

Kimhi to Is. 55, 6.

Although I dwell afar among the spheres, I also dwell on earth among those who are contrite and humble in spirit. Think not that because they dwell in grief that My providential care does not hover over them.

Kimhi to Is. 57, 15.

THE eye of faith is blessed with the vision to discern God not alone in the heavens above and the earth below, but in every circumstance and mood of life. Above nature is its Creator. We are not mere wheels in a machine. The affairs of this world are governed by a guiding thought and power. Whether we live in joy or sorrow, in peace or in strife, in rest or in weariness, all

that we behold is animated and beautified by the spirit of the living God. His unseen presence surrounds us and enters into our souls. He is near us, giving us strength even though we do not feel it, sending us help even though we do not know it. Noiselessly His manifold blessings steal into our lives. He is always close to this mysterious, bewildering life of ours, for ever seeking to fill us with a knowledge of Himself, for ever working upon our souls to make them pure and strong, good and true.

Not alone in set hours of devotion is God present, but whenever and wherever the soul is ready to receive Him. All things reveal God; all worthy efforts disclose His presence. All duties, the most menial of occupations, are expressions of His spirit. Nothing that we do is ever secular, if we but know how to make our tasks divine. Our daily duties can become channels of His truth and love. For God is everywhere, in the song of the bird and in the beauty of the rose, in the smile of the child and in the wrath of the seer, yea, in the love and service of the humblest man and woman. "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth."

ALMIGHTY God and Father, Thou keepest constant guard and watch over all Thy people. Thou art at our right hand, and we know that we cannot be moved. We give Thee heartfelt thanks, O Lord, for the enduring faith, the common hope and purpose, of Thy people Israel. May Thy spirit ever be with us, to broaden and deepen our lives. When doubt assails us, give us, we beseech Thee,

such realization of Thy presence as will save us from confusion and distrust. Thou hast implanted within our hearts an inextinguishable longing that may impel us toward Thee. Reveal Thyself more clearly to our yearning heart, and send us forth amid the cares and trials of this world sustained by the consciousness of companionship with Thee. Help us to know Thee, to find Thee in all familiar experiences of life. May the sense of Thy nearness put to flight the petty cares and fears that so often consume the joy and nobleness of life. Open our eyes, we pray Thee, that we may see Thine image in the souls of our fellow beings; and teach us so to serve, that we may confirm the bond of our brotherhood with them and our joyous union with Thee.

Courageous Faith

And the Lord said: I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God: Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And He said: Certainly I will be with thee.

And the Lord turned towards him and said: Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian; have not I sent thee? And he said unto Him: Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Menasseh and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said: Surely I will be with thee.

Say not: I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

Behold I have made thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls.

Exodus 3, 10-12; Judges 6, 14-16; Jeremiah 1, 6-8, 18.

Be as strong as a leopard, as swift as an eagle, as fleet as a stag, and as mighty as a lion in doing the will of Thy Father in heaven. *Ethics of the Fathers, V, 23.*

Let each man take on the strength of a lion, as he arises each morning to the service of his Creator.

Shulhan Aruch (Path of Life, opening sentnce)

Like a swift moving fire which ceases not nor rests, until it has accomplished its purpose, so must man's energy be in the service of God.

Moses Luzzato, (1707-47) (Path of Upright, Chap. 7.)

VENTURESOMENESS is commonly associated with the career of the soldier, the explorer and the merchant. But there is also in religion a place for venturesomeness. There may be ventures for God and for the soul. The saints and the mártyrs of history were God's adventurers.

The word "faith" in its worthy sense can mean naught else than an adventuring in God's name. Faith, properly understood, is not belief contrary to reason but conduct conformable to reason. In a world of impulses and passions, there is no conduct more venturesome and more holy than loyalty to the principles which our calmer moments have discerned. One who keeps his composure though a whole world rages, who is gracious even to injurers and detractors, who observes rigid honesty though destitution be risked, who cherishes his well reasoned convictions though a whole world persecutes, he who labors for peace amid a world at war, who speaks the truth though all others prevaricate, who is pure and candid though a whole world jeers—such a one is, of all adventurers, the bravest and the noblest.

Our sages say that we must be as swift as eagles and as strong as lions if we would serve our heavenly Father. All of our powers must unite at their best to succeed in life's greatest adventure, the pilgrimage to God's holy mountain where we may learn His ways. For we need a mighty faith to praise Him when we walk among men who mock at His word; we need endless trust to be patient in the vale of tears and we must find the strength to answer Him when He calls us to His work.

Happy is he who ventures thus. He shall dwell in the goodly tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts.

O OMNIPOTENT Source of all Power, Thou hast put Thy spirit in Thy children and granted strength to the weak and courage to the despairing. With Thy help tyranny has been overthrown, peoples redeemed from bondage and the light of hope kept kindled in days of darkness. With Thee to aid, no task is too difficult; without Thee our strength fails and the slightest obstacles grow insurmountable.

Teach us, therefore, O Father, to seek Thee and Thy strength, that we may truly live. O strengthen us to venture everything for Thee. Fortify our souls to task themselves to the utmost in order to enter Thy presence.

Teach us that the untried and untrod ways of life are not too perilous when it is Thy kingdom that we seek. O rebuke Thou our cowardice. Overcome our hesitation. Dispel our timidity. Spur our souls to venture all things for ever, all things for Thee. Amen.

Reverence

"And Jacob awaked out his sleep, and he said: Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said: How full of awe is this place; this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

"And unto man He said: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

"But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."

Genesis 28, 16-17; Job 28, 28; Habakkuk, 2, 20.

He who has the Torah without the fear of God is like a treasurer who has the key to the inner treasure but not to the outer; how then can he reach the inner?

Talmud, (Shab. 31b)

In order to learn reverence, man must try to think of himself as standing in the veritable presence of the Creator, blessed be His name, and as actually speaking unto Him—and pleading with Him in prayer; and that God hearkeneth unto his words as a man hearkeneth to his neighbor when he speaketh unto him.

Then let him meditate upon God's greatness, and think of Him high and exalted beyond the power of human praise, beyond the highest perfection that the mind of man can picture. When all these thoughts enter the soul of man, he is overcome by awe and trembling and he serves the Lord with reverence.

Moses Luzzatto, 1707-1747 ("Path of the Upright", Chap. 19)

TO the reverent mind there is something profound and mysterious in everything that confronts our gaze. We look out upon the world of nature, and cannot but suspect a deep secret buried within its bosom. We behold man in the

midst of his activities, and cannot but be impressed with the nobility of his soul, the sacredness of his life. We watch the elemental forces as they operate in nature and man, and cannot but stand in awe of their greatness and mystery. In fact, nature yields to us its deepest secrets, man discloses the supreme dignity of his life, only when we feel a deep reverence toward them.

And when we are thus actuated by the spirit of reverence, we are seldom content with idle contemplation. We seek to express it in forms of active service. We know that our reverence of God is true, when we yearn to serve Him, to learn His will and do it. We know that our reverence of nature is true, when we seek to understand her ways, to study her laws and obey them. And how can we prove true our reverence toward the mystery and greatness of the human soul, unless we strive to exalt and serve man, to recognize in every human relationship the sanctity of Man's nature?

AS humble servants of Thy benign will, O God, we ask Thee to put into our hearts the fear and love of Thee, and to fill our souls with sincere reverence toward our fellowmen and all the sublime works of Thy creation. Quicken our conscience, we pray Thee, that we may desire more of the beauty of Thy holiness; that we may seek Thy will above all ambitions. Grant us the vision to see that it is Thy throbbing life that flows in every vein and spreads abroad in leaf and flower; that it is Thine own supernal glory that we behold in the beauty of earth and sky. Deepen our sense

of unity, and increase our joy of brotherhood, that we may learn to serve Thee by dispensing of our love and care to all Thy children. Hear our prayer, O Lord, who art our strength and redeemer. Amen.

Duty

Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Guide me in Thy truth, and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee do I wait all the day.

Therefore Eli said unto Samuel: Go, lie down; and it shall be, if thou be called that thou shalt say: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. *Psalm 25, 4-5; I Sam. 3, 9.*

Said Rabbi Adda: There are as many duties to perform as there are sinews in the body of man. Each day the duties call to man and say: Perform us, in order that thou mayest live through the merit of our fulfillment. There are as many ways of neglecting duties as there are days in the year. Each day the sun from its rising unto its setting calls out to man: By the holy Name of Him who has kept thee alive to this day, commit no iniquity. Do not overweight thyself and all the world in the scale of guilt. *Midrash, (Tanhuma Ki Setze No. 2)*

THE voice of duty must be, for every individual, the voice of God. Duty may be humble but it is never trivial. Our duty signifies our place in the universe, for the laws of the universe are service, justice and love.

What is our duty? An abstract definition of duty is difficult, yet, in our practical life, how few are the doubts that duty presents! The very next thing to do, the very next step to take is always certain. We are like a man with a lantern on a dark road. The lantern shows its bearer only the first step ahead. But that suffices. Let the first step be taken and the next step will be illumined

and then the next step and thus to the journey's end.

Duty is the foundation of all that is excellent in human existence. It is the basis of service toward others and of benefit for one's self. Without duty there can be neither sustenance nor health, neither justice nor friendship, neither knowledge nor peace. How poise, character and happiness disintegrate when duty is ignored! The commandments of God form a system of duties, duties to our fellowmen, to our souls, and to God, our Father. Without them there is neither happiness nor peace and obedience of them is true life and length of days.

THOU are calling us, Lord. Out of eternity Thou are summoning us to become sharers in Thy kingdom of order and beauty. By the bridge of duty we pass from chaos to creation; duty, at times as forbidding as chaos, yet ultimately as radiant as creation in all its splendor.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that our duties may evoke our zealous devotion. When Thou callest us may we give eager answer to Thy summons: Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth Thee. Lead us along the paths of duty for they are paths of peace. O enable Thou us so to acquit ourselves that there may come unto us the serenity and deep contentment which duty alone conferreth and which only they can find who heed Thy blessed call. Amen.

Shabuoth–The Feast of Weeks

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but make them known unto thy children and to thy children's children; the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me: Assemble Me the people, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

And these words which I command thee this day shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up.

Deut. 4, 9-10; 6, 6-7.

Come, children, chant the King arrayed in glory,
Enswathed in praise eternally intoned.
His splendor is the theme of song and story;
In awful majesty He sits enthroned.

O hear the tale of His tremendous power;
His very name bespeaks His wondrous might.
'Tis sweet upon His shrine our hymns to shower;
His Temple's rites are pleasing in His sight.

His glory is a fitting decoration,
His robe of majesty beseems the King;
Hence rises in eternal exaltation
The song His ministering angels sing.

May Israel in the Synagog assembling
Be ever heedful of His holy Name,

The right to utter which in fear and trembling
Serves Israel's sacred scions to procliam.
Simon ben Isaac of Mayence 10th Cent.—translated by I. Zangwill.

THIS is the day when Israel stood at the foot of Sinai and saw the flames and the clouds enveloping the mountain. Above the sound of the trumpet, they heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto them from the midst of the flames. Surely the words were engraven upon their hearts never to be erased! Never would they forget the wonders their eyes had seen! Yet before they left the wilderness, Moses needed to admonish them, saying: Do not forget what your eyes have seen when ye stood at Sinai. Keep the divine Word living in your hearts, for ye must teach your children the way of life.

Children are confirmed in their faith through the lives of their parents. In order that the knowledge of God shall not perish from among us, children must behold its light illumine the lives of those they love. Upon each parent in Israel, therefore, is placed the duty of living as a witness of the revelation of Sinai; to keep the word of God vital within him; to cherish each precious memory of God's nearness; to recall in joy those hours when the divine voice spoke to him, bringing him strength and guidance; to recount unceasingly the abundant mercies of God. When he sitteth in his house, the praise of the Eternal shall be upon his life. The children, hearkening, will learn to call upon the name of the Lord. If through the words of the parent there sounds the

voice of God, the children will stand in reverence at the foot of Sinai confirmed in the faith of their fathers.

THOU Life of the Universe, be Thou revealed anew this day unto every soul. Lead us to the Mt. Sinai that is within our souls, for there may we behold Thy glory. O how wondrously we glimpse Thee when we survey our own possibilities and powers, how gloriously we find Thee when we find ourselves! As the daybreak of love and beauty ariseth within us, O how rich is our vision of Thee! How near Thou art!

Lord, this very springtide becomes Mt. Sinai if only our hearts be purified and, like Israel of old, prepared for Thine approach. From the unsanctified heart Thou art hidden. Only the path of love and truth leadeth to Thee. Through holiness we approach Thee. O exquisite intimations of a beauty beyond beauty, of depths of glory beyond the visible glory, of a loveliness transcendent whereof the splendors of nature, verdure glistening and skies beaming and a myriad blossoms exhaling fragrance are but the mystic whisper!

And when the hour is one of trouble and our lives are, like Sinai, heaped with dark thunder clouds and shaken with forces volcanic, O then too be Thou manifest. Help us to penetrate beyond all grief and gloom to where Thou abidest above the fury of the storm. Let the supreme and imperishable worth of love and service be revealed when, in the lightning flashes of adversity, the futility of all else is made manifest. Speak, through these insights, unto all whose lives endure the dark-

ness of anxiety. O Thou who art our help, the very consciousness of Thee is strength.

Eternal Father, let our boys and girls from this day find in Thee the confirmation of their souls. Invest Thou our rites and customs with the living flame of Thy spirit, that our confirmants may, in truth, look upon Thy beauty and exult in doing and learning Thy will. Descend Thou into every heart that is lowly as Sinai is lowly, humble as the thorn bush is humble and let us hear Thee say for evermore unto our souls: I am the Lord, thy God. Amen.

Vision and Hope

The Lord reigneth: He is clothed in majesty; He hath girded Himself with strength; yea, the world is established that it cannot be moved.

Let the humble eat and be satisfied; let them praise the Lord that seek after Him; may your heart be quickened for ever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and He is the ruler over the nations.

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Psalm 93, 1; 22, 27-29; Isaiah 11, 6-9.

All the world shall come to serve Thee
And bless Thy glorious Name,
And Thy righteousness triumphant
The islands shall acclaim.
And the people shall go seeking
Who knew Thee not before,
And the ends of the earth shall praise Thee,
And tell Thy greatness o'er.

They shall build for Thee their altars,
Their idols overthrown,
And their graven gods shall shame them,
As they turn to Thee alone.
They shall worship Thee at sunrise

And feel Thy kingdom's might,
And impart their understanding
To those astray in night.

They shall testify Thy greatness,
And of Thy power speak,
And extol Thee, shrined, uplifted
Beyond man's highest peak.
And with reverential homage,
Of love and wonder born,
With the ruler's crown of beauty
Thy head they shall adorn.

With the coming of Thy kingdom
The hills shall break into song,
And the islands laugh exultant
That they to God belong.
And all their congregations
So loud Thy praise shall sing,
That the uttermost peoples, hearing,
Shall hail Thee crowned King.

Anonymous; Day of Atonement Service—Translated by I. Zangwill.

THE tenacity of our courage depends upon our larger ideals. Whenever we despair of humanity, we despair of ourselves. Whenever we are poisoned by the thought that mankind labors in vain, our own labor inevitably grows weak and dispirited. Our power to continue even our humblest tasks is rooted deeper than we realize in the soil of our own dreams of God's kingdom on earth.

The prophets and the psalmists of Israel encouraged the humble with visions of glory. When

men stumbled in the darkness of grief, they bade them 'rise, shine with the glory of God,' assuring them that 'nations would walk by their light.' When men were saddened and embittered, the psalmist cried out: 'Sing unto the Lord a new song,' for the time would surely come when all the nations of the earth would shout for joy unto the Lord.

Without vision we perish. To endure the present, we must dream of the future. We cannot live from day to day without the hope that day is added unto day, and that even the humblest of our achievements count in the total reckoning. Our struggle assumes a new value and our labor a new dignity if we believe that every occasion when we curb our anger and forego resentment is treasured by our Father and, by His aid, brings nearer the day when war shall cease. How good it is to seek the Lord when we know that every new vision of Him becomes immortal and that, by our growing knowledge of Him, we are hastening the day when all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

O ETERNAL One, our days measured by Thine infinity, are but a passing breath. The thought of Thy greatness terrifies us, and in our weakness, we foolishly imagine that Thou dost not regard us, that our efforts are vain and our achievements lost as a voice in the wind. Grant us courage, O Father. Send us the assurance that as Thy words are eternal, so dost Thou crown our strivings and dreams with immortality; that no

true hope ever perishes and no high vision fades; that Thou preservest all our aspirations so that their total may add to the merit of Thy children and brighten Thine image within them.

We need Thy help, O God, for we are mortal and weak. Selfishness, blindness and rage often control us, and we delay Thy kingdom as frequently as we hasten it. O illumine our blindness, and enlarge our vision; pardon our anger and increase our serenity; forgive our iniquities and treasure our goodness, so that, in Thine own time, all men may acknowledge Thee and live in Thy light. Amen.

Accepting the Burden

He was wounded because of our transgressions,
He was crushed because of our iniquities;
The chastisement of our welfare was upon him
And with his stripes we were healed.

And Moses returned unto the Lord and said: Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them a god of gold. Let now forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.

Before I was afflicted I did err; but now I observe Thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted in order that I might learn Thy statutes.

Isaiah 53, 5; Exodus 32, 31; Psalm 119, 67, 71.

God's word recorded in Scripture: 'Behold it is very good' refers to the suffering which occurs in the world. But how can the words 'behold it is very good' be applied to suffering? Because through it men attain immortality. For, go forth in life and see which path leads man to eternity. Surely it is the path of sorrow.

Midrash, (Gen. Rab. 9:8)

When mankind languisheth in pain let no man say I shall return unto mine own household, eat and drink and be at peace! Nay, each man must be willing to suffer with his fellowmen. He who shares the afflictions of others will merit to behold the comforting of humanity.

Talmud, (Taanith 11a)

Among the ways of acquiring understanding of the Divine Law, is the cheerful acceptance of suffering.

Ethics of the Fathers, VI, 6

THE psalmist recalls the sombre days of his affliction, the sudden disaster, the dazed heart heavy with grief, then the gradual healing of the

wounded spirit, the chastened soul, the deepened understanding, and the blessed sense of God's comfort and mercy. All this he recalls and praises the Lord: 'It is good that Thou hast afflicted me, for thus have I learned Thy statutes.'

When we live at ease we sail carelessly over the surface of life unaware of its deeper undercurrents. Then calamity overtakes us, and, in the struggle with the waves, we learn how precious is life, how deep is pain, how boundless our gratitude to our Deliverer and Preserver. God brings us to the very gates of death, in order that we may learn, manfully, how to choose life.

It is not only our own affliction which brings us blessing. Our fellowmen suffer for our benefit. From their tragedies we learn how to avoid misfortune. Even the material comforts of our life are largely due to suffering of those who lived before us. The houses in which we live, the fuel we burn, the streets we traverse, all have a history of toil, suffering, danger, and even death. The musician who delights us with his art, the teacher who brings light to our minds, the physician who rescues us from pain, all have endured years of self-denial, toil and trouble. We live by the sufferings of the mother who bore us and the parents who reared us. The beautiful lives which inspire us have been wrought in the furnace of affliction. The call comes to all of us to bless as we have been blessed; to accept our share of this interblend of pain and benefit. We who profit by the vast linkage of human woe and weal cannot refuse the burden of pain. We must patiently accept the

daily restraints of conscience, and walk the arduous way of virtue. Perhaps others may profit by our strivings and find in our humble lives a blessing.

IN Thy mercy, O God of Love, Thou causest light to shine in hours of darkness. We thank Thee that Thou hast afflicted us, for thus hast Thou shown us Thy salvation.

Teach us, O Lord, to trust in Thy love, to accept with patience, the grief Thou sendest. Grant us the hope that we may behold our affliction and our trust and be enlightened. Open our eyes to see that none liveth to himself alone; that innumerable are the strands binding each to each. May our sorrows be hallowed and solaced by the thought that as no man liveth for himself alone, no man suffereth for himself alone; that all that suffering createth, whether of beauty within us or of achievement for the good of others, belongeth not to one but to all. Our sufferings can become highways to the goals of love. Lead us therefore in the paths of love that our every sorrow may be endured for Thy name's sake, so that even the valley of the shadow may become a pathway where we may walk with Thee.

God Our Eternal Home

One thing I have asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. For He concealeth me in His pavilion in the day of evil. He hideth me in the covert of His tent; He lifteth me up upon a rock.

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul yearneth, yea, even pineth for the courts of the Lord.

For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

Lord, Thou hast been our dwellingplace in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.

Psalm 27, 4-5; Psalm 84, 2, 3, 11; Psalm 90, 1-2.

Unto Thy Rock, O my soul, uplift thy gaze,
His lovingkindness day and night implore.
Remember thy creator in the days
Of youth, in song His glorious name adore.
He is thy portion through earth's troubled maze,
Thy shelter, when life's pilgrimage is o'er.
Thou knowest that there waits for thee always
A peaceful resting-place, His throne before.
Therefore the Lord my God, I bless and praise,
Even as all creatures bless Him evermore.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol, 11th Century.

HOME offers shelter and peace. Home is the sanctuary within which life's fiercest struggles abate. There, more than anywhere else, individuality has free play. Outside of the home our wishes must be curbed, our tastes overriden, our convenience ignored; but in the home, the multi-

tude is excluded, and our individuality reassumes its dignity.

God is our eternal home because, unlike finite man who ignores much and heeds little, the Infinite ignoreth naught and heedeth all. Our individuality is precious and indispensible unto Him.

"All I could never be
All men ignored in me
This I was worth to God."

Unto the Divine Father naught is outcast, naught strange, naught negligible. The weakest and the obscurest are significant unto Him. The psalmist has said: "We are the people of His pasture and the flock of His hand." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that reverence Him." "Though father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up."

Closely linked with our consciousness of every individual's worth is our consciousness of immortality. We are prone to deny immortality only in moments of weariness and despair, when we lose sight of human dignity and worth. A heightened sense of the preciousness of the individual to God brings with it a clearer intimation that the soul is deathless. If we are cherished children to our Father, then are we immortal. The moment we sense God as our home, we know Him to be our eternal home.

O THOU whose mercies are infinite, open our eyes to the beauty and worth of every human soul. Heal our blindness. Enable us to peer beneath the outward appearance to the realities

within. Give us that grace of mind and nobility of character that can penetrate beneath all that is unpleasant and forbidding in our fellowmen and can see that precious core of individuality whereby humanity becomes divine and all hearts are linked together because linked unto Thee.

Yea, in Thee we are at home, Eternal One, and only in Thee. Though we seem homeless amid life's storms, Thou alone are acquainted with all our ways. Thou wilt not abandon our soul to the grave, Thou wilt show us the path of life. In Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Amen.

Tisha Be'ab—The Ninth of Ab

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Bid Jerusalem take heart, and proclaim unto her, that her time of service is accomplished, that her guilt is paid off; that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Hark! one calleth: Clear ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make plain in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the rugged shall be made level, and the rough places a plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. *Isaiah 40, 1-5.*

The Lord saith: My law is in your hands, but the great future is in My hands. Each depends upon the other. If ye desire that I hasten the Messianic time then I require of you to observe My Divine Law. As I shall not forget the promised future, so forget ye not My Law.

Midrash (Pesik. Rabbati ed. Friedmann 144b)

'The path in the wilderness' and 'the highway in the desert' of which the prophet speaks, means the training and experience which brings perfection to the soul. This is the 'pathway to God.' When men will learn righteousness in all their deeds, they will be prepared to come near unto Him; and His glory will be seen over them, as the prophet sayeth: 'The glory of the Lord will be revealed.' Since the sorrows have indeed come to purge the soul of the sins which separate it from God, surely there will also come the sense of nearness unto Him, which is the whole hope of the soul.

Isaac Arama, 15th Cent. (Adapted fr. Akeda 11 a, b)

BENIGHTED men worship gods of wrath. When men lived under the cruelties of savage and barbaric life, their primitive minds could conceive only of an angry God, who punishes constantly, and who yields reluctantly to pleas for mercy. But as men's souls expanded and their sense of justice grew, they began to perceive that God is not harsh, although He may be stern, and that even when He sends afflictions He is ever just. It is not His wilful displeasure which sends sorrow to man, but rather a benign and serene purpose.

Thus when both the first and the second Temples were destroyed on the ninth of Ab, our fathers had long outgrown the belief that God was raging against them in cruel anger. They staunchly believed that the calamities which befell them, were either just requital for their sins, or else sage discipline to lead them into sinlessness.

They knew that God was just and merciful. Even in their deepest woe they trusted in Him. Confident of His goodness they listened to words of comfort. Gradually the sense of sin wore away from their souls, and they stood in strong humility, as men chastened by God to fit them for His purposes. They realized that the Divine intentions were unsearchable, but they believed them to be benevolent, and they accepted them in love. Into the tangled thicket of their former lives came the scythe of pain, clearing away the nettles of iniquity and making a highway for the Lord of Hosts, that men may be able to walk with God.

O ETERNAL One, Master of History, to whom a thousand years are but a span, kingdoms of the earth wither as a leaf and fade as a flower, but Thy purposes stand unchanged from age to age. We cannot know Thine eternal plans. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. Yet we thank Thee for the trust in Thee, which Thou hast implanted within us. Pardon the bitter tears which we have shed at Thy chastisements. Forgive our regrets when we recall the smouldering ruins of ancient glories. Forgive us, for we are but mortal and our sight is blinded.

Plant Thou in our hearts unconquerable faith that we may trust in Thy goodness. Comfort us with evidence of Thy mercy. Strengthen us that we may triumph over pain, and give us courage to live and fulfil the duties which Thou hast set before Thy people Israel. Amen.

Humility

Now the man Moses was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth.

When pride cometh, then cometh shame; but with the lowly is wisdom.

Thus saith the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord who exercise mercy, justice and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

Num. 12, 3; Proverbs 11, 2; Jeremiah 9, 22-23.

It is better for a man to be told, 'Arise, ascend from thy lowly station,' than to be told, 'Descend from thy place of pride.' *Midrash, (Exodus 4, 1.)*

Because of his meekness Moses was permitted to approach the cloud of glary. Thus Scripture teaches us that he who is humble brings God's presence close unto earth to dwell among men. *Mekilta to Jethro.*

Moses merited to receive God's law, for he was humble and reverent. The crown of the Divine law is humility and its sandal is reverence.

Midrash, (Tanhuma, Genesis 1, 1)

HUMILITY is the noblest virtue of a religious life. It is the key that unlocks the precious treasures of spiritual understanding. When we are self-willed and arrogant, when we assume the haughty mood, the most obvious facts of our existence become shrouded in obscurity. Truth, ever ready to yield itself to the inquiring mind, shrinks from the withering look of the proud. On-

ly when we feel profoundly humble, only when we are conscious of our own weakness, of the uncertainty of our own steps, do we feel impelled to struggle for knowledge, for light and guidance; and only then can we hope to obtain enlightenment.

It is the sense of dependence, which is the very essence of humility, that fills us also with a desire to search for the source of all truth and wisdom, the great Rock in whose shadow we may ever find comfort and strength as we wander through the weary land. When we seek Him we find life a delight. A vision of His greatness and His glory breaks upon us like the radiant morning dawn, and, with wholeness of heart and complete self-surrender, we adore and glorify His name.

O LORD, my God, King of the universe, Father of all men, Thou art great, and Thy name is exalted above all. All that I am and all that I may yet be, come from Thine aid. Without Thy guiding hand and sustaining power, of what avail would my efforts be!

With my head bowed in humility, and my lips attuned to praise, I come before Thee to ask Thy help. Give me, I pray Thee, a wise and constant heart that I may never be moved to haughtiness of spirit and self-pride. Imbue me with the consciousness of my limitations, my weaknesses and imperfections. Help me to be kind in thought, gentle in word, generous in deed, so that these fruits of my humility may speak to all men of Thy boundless love and care. Heavenly Father, I am sustained by Thy love. I do not grovel as a slave before Thee. I am Thy child and I may not

depreciate that nature within me which shares Thine own eternity. Yet I humble myself before Thee, O God, as I strive to climb the summits of Thy thoughts and seek to fathom the depths of Thy nature. Reward, I pray Thee, my humility with enlightenment. Raise me up from the darkness into the radiance of Thy presence.

Cooperation

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.

Will two walk together except they have agreed?

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and make firm the tottering knees.

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart; and they that harass Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not vex Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

Ecc. 4, 9; Amos 3, 3; Isaiah 35, 3; 11, 13.

Provide thyself with a teacher and acquire a comrade, and weigh all men in the scale of merit.

Ethics of the Fathers, 1, 7.

This teaches man his proper relationship to his fellow-men. It is impossible for man to stand alone. He must be near to his fellow-men. One should never say: 'What have I to do with so-and-so; he is not worthy of being my friend; he has sinned; he is wicked.' Nay, man should strive to bring others near unto himself and not repel them. 'Weigh all men in the scale of merit.' This means that there should be no discord between thee and thy comrade whenever thou dost imagine that he has done something against you.

Judah Loew ben Bezalel, 16th Cent. (Comm. Path of Life ad loc)

COOPERATION and concord are the basis of the social order. We live together and are dependent upon one another. Each must give generously to the rest and receive kindness in turn. 'Two are better than one.' Should two contend, both will suffer. Social well-being never comes from conflict, but from cooperation. Work-

ing apart is wasteful, working against each other is worse. Social competitions, social antagonisms, social conflicts mean social upheaval and havoc.

But it is not due merely to worldly wisdom that Judaism asserts: 'Let there be no strife between us,' but because of the larger principle: 'We are brothers.' In God, all men unite; for He is the universal Father. Just as, when we approach God, strife and bitterness cease and we come closer to our brethren, so too when we seek to understand the heart of our brethren, narrowness and selfishness vanish, and we may come nearer to God. Our generosity to our fellowmen and their forbearance toward us, teach us the meaning of God's loving kindness. Our efforts to bring about unity among men clarify our vision and give fuller meaning to our words when we proclaim: 'The Lord our God is One.' As faith in God leads men to peace, so peace and concord lead men to God.

LORD, Thou art our Father, and we are Thy children. In Thy sight all man-made distinctions vanish, the wise and the simple, the successful and the unfortunate all partake of Thy paternal beneficence. The abundance of Thy lovingkindness shames our selfishness, and the endlessness of Thy mercy rebukes our grudges and hatred. Our fraternal strife is a denial of Thy Fatherhood.

Teach us, O Father, to live in concord with our fellow-men, and thus to prove that we, Thy children, are united in Thee. Thou dost bid us labor in Thy name; teach us to labor in Thy spirit, in

patience and in justice. Since Thou hast told us that we are brethren, teach us also how good it is to dwell together in unity. The task which Thou hast set us, to rebuild the world according to Thy plan, is too great for each of us alone, but unite Thou our efforts and we can achieve it. The wind and the rain, the sun and the stars work together harmoniously fulfilling Thy changeless law. O grant unto Thy mortal servants a measure of Thy patience and forbearance, that all of us, parents and children, toilers and planners, races and nations, blend the voices of our hearts to praise Thy name together; so that, when we silence the shoutings of discord and quiet the murmurings of envy, Thy still voice may be heard speaking through the voice of humanity. Amen.

Alike Before God

Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small and the great alike.

The rich and the poor meet together—
The Lord is the Maker of them all.
The poor man and the oppressor meet together;
The Lord giveth light to the eyes of them both.
Would that all the Lord's people were prophets.

Deuteronomy 1, 17; Proverbs 22,2; 29, 13; Numbers 11, 29.

I call to witness heaven and earth that it matters not whether it be non-Jew or Jew, man or woman, bond or free; upon each according to his conduct shall the divine Spirit rest. *Midrash, (Yalkut to Judges 42)*

Despise not any man, and carp not at anything; for there is not a man that has not his hour, and there is not a thing that has not its place. *Ethics of the Fathers, (4, 3)*

FAVORITISM means partiality, and both partiality and favoritism are synonyms for injustice. Favoritism in the law courts, respecting persons in judgment, is an intolerable evil. In public life, favoritism is the sister of corruption. In the home, favoritism means the ill rearing and the disrupting of families. Scripture portrays a long course of tribulations as the consequence of Jacob's favoritism for Joseph.

The temptation toward favoritism arises from the diversity of human powers and endowments. In the home, some children are more obedient than others; in school, some are more receptive than others. In social life, some persons are more beautiful and graceful than others; in business some

are more capable than others; in the professions some are more talented than others. But the world is vast. There is a niche for everyone. There are conspicuous places for some; obscure places for others. The bane of favoritism is that it allows no place for "failures" and denies our common childhood to God. The disobedient or unresponsive child, the homely person or the awkward, incapable or untalented person should not be despised or scorned. A suitable place in human economy should be sought for each and all; and opportunities should be made available so that all may attain their highest possible strength.

Consideration for the poor and lowly is the very essence of Jewish moral doctrine. The poor and lowly can not fill the roles of the gifted and capable; yet they should not be despised. They should not be "cast as rubbish to the void." The humanity of every human being no matter how unpromising, should be honored. We should hold fast the faith that he who is unsuited to one task in life may be ideally suited to another. God finds a place for us all. We must emulate His loving-kindness and justice.

ETERNAL One, Thou art the Father of all. Rich and poor, high and low, gifted and commonplace, are alike precious in Thine eyes. Each has his place, each his work in the world. Bless Thy children with the ability to find each his best place. Grant us the joy of doing the work and fulfilling the tasks for which we are suited. Grant that, beneath all human inequalities, we may dis-

cern and ever keep in sight the equality of value which every soul hath before Thee. For "Thou art our Father; we are Thy children. Thou art our Shepherd; we are Thy flock, Thou art our king; we are Thy people. Thou art our possession; we are Thy portion." Amen.

Man's Place in Nature

O Lord our God, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth!

Whose majesty is rehearsed above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou founded strength. . . . .

When I behold Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast established;

What is man that Thou art mindful of him and the son of man that Thou thinkest of him?

Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor.

Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet:

Sheep and oxen all of them, yea, and the beast of the field; the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea; whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O Lord our God, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth! *Psalm 8.*

The first path of humility is to know of God's loving-kindness to all His creatures; and to be conscious of the superiority which He gave to man over all other living beings, as the Psalm says: Thou didst give him dominion over the works of Thy hand. When he will contrast his own little mastery of nature with the exalted power and endless wisdom of God, he will surely be lowly and humble.
Bachya, 'Duties of the Heart' (Adapted, 'Gate of Humility', Ch. 6)

Of all the ways of awakening inner reverence in man, the best is the contemplation of the works of God. Their transcendent greatness must inspire awe.
Elijah de Vidas, 16th Cent. (Beginning of Wisdom 1, 2)

IN the drama of nature man plays a double role; a servant in lowliness and a king in pride. The magnificence of the heavens shame him into littleness, yet brute creation bows before his prowess. Compared to the eternity of the stars, his life is but a breath; compared to the seasonal withering of plants, his mighty rock-built cities take on an aspect of eternity. Man is but a mote in the sunbeam, and yet is himself a radiant source of light. To the heavens a mortal, to the animals a god.

Both the mighty universe above him, and humble nature below him, speak unto his heart. He must hearken to both voices. From the eternal stars, let him learn patience and reverence for God's greatness. From the world beneath his feet, let him learn kindness and love and how to walk in the footsteps of the Creator. Let him grow to be humble yet confident in his labor; expecting mercy and dispensing kindness; praying for abundance and being himself unselfish. As a humble servant in God's great palace let him be reverent. As a strong worker in God's own workshop, let him continue the works of creation, benevolently, mercifully and unselfishly.

LORD of all worlds, who inhabitest eternity, Thou are high and exalted. We are humble before Thee. Thou art with the contrite and the weak. Thou showest us Thy mercy. We cannot fathom Thy purposes. Thou hast placed us in a wondrous universe; we know not why. We trust in Thee and work in Thy name. Thou takest us away as with a flood; we know not whither. We commend our spirits into Thy hand and await eternity.

We call upon Thy name, O Father; give us of Thy strength, that the splendors of the world may not crush us. Grant us of Thy goodness, that our mastery may not corrupt us. Teach us how to reverence Thy greatness, and unto those who reverence us, how to be merciful; how to stand unafraid amidst all of Thy wonders, and, learning from Thy tenderness, how to be gentle to all of Thy creatures. May the heavens declare unto us Thy glory, and may our humble living exemplify Thy lovingkindness. Amen.

Night Prayer

Tremble and sin not, commune with your own hearts upon your beds and be still.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

It is vain for you that ye arise early and sit up late, ye that eat the bread of toil. So He giveth unto His beloved in sleep.

For His anger is but for a moment; His favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Into Thy hand I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of Truth.

I lay me down and I sleep. I awake for the Lord sustaineth me. *Psalm 4, 5-6; 127, 1-2; 30, 6; 31, 6; 3, 6.*

He is the living God to save
My Rock while sorrow's toils endure.
My banner and my stronghold sure
The cup of life whene'er I crave.

I place my soul within His palm,
Before I sleep and when I wake;
And though my body I forsake
Rest in the Lord in fearless calm.

Adon Olom, transl. by Israel Zangwill.

NIGHT has fallen and the noises of the day are stilled. Toil has been laid aside and man retires to rest. Now that the tumult of the day has

ceased, he can hear again the still voice of God; and before the mind sinks into sleep, man can find in the serene presence of the Almighty, a precious moment of quiet contemplation.

The close of the day invites our meditations, for now we can judge ourselves calmly. We have labored arduously during the daylight hours. What have we achieved? Have all our strivings brought us nearer to the haven which we sought? There has been much to do, but how small have been our powers! We see clearly that, alone, we are weak; that unless the Lord build the house we labor in vain. Yet we know that with the right hand of the Lord to help us we can do valiantly. We must trust in Him and pray that He sustain us.

Perhaps at this eventide we are regretfully reviewing a day misspent; energies squandered in trivial occupations; opportunities for usefulness and righteousness ignored and lost. Yet even the disappointments of such a retrospect need not bring despair, for we may find strength in the assurance that tomorrow God will awaken us to new opportunities and new power. Though weeping may tarry for the night, joy cometh in the morning.

Such shall be the communion of our hearts as we turn away from the accomplishments or the regrets of the day, humbly yet bravely, and face without terror the mysteries of the night. We commit our spirits into the care of our Father. When the Lord is with us we have no fear.

LORD of the spirits of all flesh, a thousand years are but as a day in Thy sight. The days of my life are as a fleeting shadow. Yet it is Thy will

that I live my brief moment of life in accordance with Thy law, in righteousness and in truth. Thou dost bid us number our days that we may acquire a heart of wisdom. Therefore I lay before Thee the work of the day that has past. Judge Thou the toil of Thy child. All secrets of my heart, all my frustrated strivings after Thee, Thou knowest. Be Thou merciful unto me.

In the sight of men I may be accounted worthy. They may speak of my achievements and assure me of my success. But in Thy presence I am humble. Weak is my strength, uncertain my resolution, and my accomplishments insignificant. Source of all power, sustain me. Renew my strength and purify my heart to serve Thee in truth.

The day that has passed has been full of temptations. I have yielded to numberless distractions, and forgotten Thy law. I have fallen into the petty thralldom of little sins, evasions and indulgences. Deliver me, O Lord. Let the night's rest restore me. Into Thy hand I commit my spirit, and trust in Thee. Thou wilt redeem me, O God of Truth. Amen.

Index

Accepting the Burden....143
Alike Before God....158
Compensation....87
Conciliation....50
Co-operation....155
Courageous Faith....127
Daily Revelation....19
Duty....133
Envy....80
From Strength to Strength....68
God is Near....53
God Our Eternal Home....146
God Our Refuge....38
God Our Sustainer....115
God's Bounty....61
God's Love....44
Hanukkah—The Feast of Light....77
Holy Places....121
Hospitality....102
Humility....152
Ignorance and Evil....47
Immortality....111
Israel's Unity....96
Justice....35
Light Divine....71
Man's Place in Nature....161
Meditation....9
Morning Prayer....12
Night Prayer....164
Our Enemies....105
Out of the Depths....41
Pesach—The Feast of Freedom....108

Prayer for Others 93
Presence of God 124
Purim—The Feast of Joy 90
Rejoice in the Lord 26
Reliance 74
Reverence 130
Righteousness 99
Rosh Hashanah—The New Year 31
Sabbath—The 22
Shabuoth—The Feast of Weeks 135
Sincerity 28
Starting Anew 15
Succoth—The Feast of Tabernacles 64
Suffering 118
Tisha Be'ab—The Ninth of Ab 149
Tolerance 83
Vision and Hope 139
Yom Kippur—The Day of Atonement 57

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